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THE QUARTET

A SEQUEL TO

Dab Kinzer: A Story of a Growing Boy

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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THE QUARTET.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE QUARTET.

THE fourth week of the fall term at Grantley Academy was drawing to a close. Dr. Brandegee had been principal of that institution for twenty years, and he frankly declared that he never before had under his care a more promising collection of pupils. Whenever he said so, moreover, he was sure to receive for a reply, in one form or another, —

“Well, yes, doctor, they’re a fine lot, take ‘em all around ; and there never was better October weather than we’re havin’ this season.”

Good weather has its value in the training of boys, as well as for the ripening of other crops ; but it has its dangers also, — for instance, in the tendency it sometimes develops towards the undue increase of boy-made “Saturdays.” One a week will rarely answer for some fellows after the nuts begin to fall.

Four weeks is not a long time in the history of a nation ; but it will do a great deal for four boys, and for the room in which they spend the greater part of their in-doors time.

None of the Grantley landladies felt called upon to supply their young boarders with elegancies, and Mrs. Myers had not been guilty of any foolish excess in furnishing the large square room assigned to Dabney Kinzer and Ford Foster. Frank Harley's "coop," as Ford called it, that opened into the larger room, looked all the better because very nearly the same number and kind of articles of furniture had less elbow-room. As for the great half-story garret over the kitchen and milk-room, the bit of a rug before Dick Lee's narrow bed looked like an oasis.

"It is a nice room," he had more than once remarked to his young friends. "And I's got so I can find my way anywhere, all over it, in de dark."

That was well for Dick, considering how long the nights were growing ; and it was also a good thing, seeing winter was coming, that Dab and Ford had voted their big chamber a common property.

"It's our gymnasium," remarked Ford Foster. "And it's our study, library, parlor, common-council-room, dormitory, armory, and the room where we

eat our apples. There isn't just such another room in Grantley."

So Dr. Brandegee thought, when his tour of official visitation and inspection at last brought him into it one Thursday.

"Evergreens over the windows," he said to himself. "And three flower-pots, with plants in them. I had not expected that."

They would not have been there if it had not been for Frank Harley, who had announced his set purpose to have "flowers for his hair by New Year's Day."

Two pairs of boxing-gloves hung over the narrow mirror on the dressing bureau; and several serviceable looking fishing-rods were slung on either side of them, with an evident view to artistic effect.

The plain case of black walnut book-shelves gave the ponderous principal another bit of a surprise. The contents of it were not confined to text-books, by any means. Ford's father and mother had sent him quite a box of volumes. His sister Annie had subscribed for a magazine for him. Dabney Kinzer had been careless enough to put into one of his letters a fair catalogue of Ford's treasures; and that epistle had hardly been read through, at the Kinzer tea-table, before Ham Morris brought his hand down in a way that made the plates dance.

"I declare! Miranda, we must see to that. Dabney must have something to read."

"He will have enough, if he reads all he tells about."

"Samantha," remarked her mother, "just look over that list. We've books enough."

"Yes," said Ham, "they must have forgotten something."

Pamela and Keziah had suggestions to make; and the consequence was, that, when Dr. Brandegee came to look over the rows of books on those shelves, he learned something.

"Miscellaneous. Very. I must caution them. It'll take pretty healthy brains to digest all that."

The words upon his lips were, however, as he picked up a good double-barrelled gun that stood in a corner,—

"Which of you is the sportsman? Richard, can you shoot?"

"Yes, sir, I can shoot; but I isn't any thing at all wid a gun alongside of Cap'n Dab—I mean, he is a very good shot."

Poor Dick's tongue was still an affliction to him, and he had never before seen Dr. Brandegee look so very broad and tall. The room was not very high between joints.

"Frank, do you ever use a gun? I suppose there is very little to do with one in India."

"Not much, sir," modestly replied Frank; but Ford immediately added,—

“Nothing but tigers and elephants and small game. I never fired a gun in my life, but I’m going to begin soon ; and I’ve made Frank tell me all about his tigering.”

“Tigering ?” laughed the doctor : “did you ever hurt any tigers, Frank ? I’m fond of shooting, but I never tried any thing larger than a deer.”

“Well, no, sir ; I can’t say : I fired twice at one ; and maybe I hit him, but he got away. I saw three of them killed, though. There was a man-eater in the jungle near one of our stations, and some English officers came and hunted him out. Father and I went with them. Almost all the army-men are sportsmen, only some of them don’t know how to shoot.”

“I see.”

The doctor was learning more and more about his four remarkable pupils. He had very little to say about their studies, much to their astonishment ; and before he went away they all felt they could have a sort of affection for that man, if he were not the academy principal. He seemed so interested in every thing they had ever done. They told him a good deal, somehow ; and he was hardly out of the room before Dabney broke out upon Ford Foster with, —

“I say, what on earth made you spin him such a yarn about our trip in ‘The Swallow’ ?”

“Our stormy voyage of discovery to the New-Jersey coast? Why, it was needful for him to know how Frank got ashore in America. It isn’t every passenger they’ll beach a steamer for. It’ll add to his respect for Frank.”

The way the story had been told had added greatly to the doctor’s respect for Dab Kinzer, especially as Dick Lee had been unable to avoid punctuating the narrative, now and then, with,—

“Jus’ so!” and “Dat’s a fack!”

“Does he visit all the fellows that come to the academy, I wonder?” asked Frank.

“All who are away from home, they say,” said Ford. “Wonder what he thought of our room. Don’t care if he did see the boxing-gloves. Glad things were in order.”

A somewhat different view of the matter had been taken in the sitting-room down-stairs, just a little before that.

“O mother,” had gasped Almira, “if we had but known he was coming! That room!”

“What could we have done?”

“I’d have put extra white coverlets on the beds, and some edged shams on the pillows,—and maybe the room needed sweeping.”

“Nonsense! All I care is that he didn’t see the picture Frank drew of him on the wall.”

That was the very hope the boys themselves were

now uttering ; and the doctor himself muttered, with a deep chuckle, as he walked homeward, —

“ I wonder which of them is the artist. It was cleverly done.”

It was, indeed. Dr. Brandegee in the character of an ogre, preparing to eat Joe and Fuz Hart, with the legend : —

“ I’ve no objection to pork.”

They all hoped he had not seen it, but Dab dashed it somewhat by concluding, —

“ It’s about the only thing in the room he managed to miss. I say, boys, how about our speeches to-morrow afternoon ? ”

The last hour and a half of Friday’s time was regularly given up to public declamation in the “ great room ” of the academy ; and the worst of it was, that all the young-lady pupils took part in the exercises. That is, they, with about half the young gentlemen, of all ages, and as many of the village people as might choose to come, figured as the “ audience ; ” and a very dreadful one they made for a boy to face. Those who were to “ speak ” were not publicly announced beforehand, but were privately warned of their fate by the doctor ; and he had seen fit to call upon every member of that quartet at one and the same time. On each preceding Friday they had sat and listened, while something like a score of young declaimers blushed and stammered and

spouted; and a consequence had been, that they had taken time by the forelock, and put themselves in training.

“Speech!” exclaimed Ford. “Why, we’re all ready, of course. That is, we would be if it wasn’t for the new gag.”

“De gag?” said Dick.

“Why, yes. Didn’t you hear Fuz Hart get it off on Bill Williams, when he told him he was alive yet?”

“I heard ‘im. All he said was, ‘I’m so sorry!'”

“Yes, that’s it,” said Frank; “and you put your hand up over your eyes as if you were just going to weep. What’s that got to do with our speaking?”

“You’ll see. But just don’t let’s any one of us break down. Think of those three chaps that had to walk off the stage, one after another, because they’d forgotten the first line and there wasn’t anybody to prompt ‘em.”

The quartet was unanimous in its determination not to be disgraced in any such fashion; and, as that was Thursday evening, they spent about half the rest of it in an animated rehearsal of the scraps of poetry and eloquence with which they were to make the “great room” ring on the morrow.

Mrs. Myers and Almira, down-stairs, heard the noise; and the former began to say, —

“I wish you’d just step half-way up, and see what

those young scamps are doing. I can't let them — Just hear them stamp, and clap their hands."

That was the round of applause his friends were giving to the triumphant effort of Mr. Richard Lee, and by the time Almira reached the foot of the stairs all was quiet again. She could not hear Ford Foster, as he solemnly arose and extended his hand, as he had seen men do on the platform at public meetings in the city. Said he,—

"Sir, I congratulate you. You are an ornament to Grantley, and an honor to your country. Have you got five dollars in your pocket that you can lend me?"

"Dick!" exclaimed Dab, "what would your mother say if she could see you on that stage tomorrow?"

"I's most glad she won't be dar," said Dick, somewhat undutifully. "I don't believe my mouf would work well wid her a-listenin'. Wot would you do if youah folks was dar, an' de 'long-shore men?"

Dabney was silent; for Dick's reply called up in his mind a somewhat populous vision, and he had his doubts about it. At the same moment he caught a glimpse of Frank Harley's face. There was such a far-away look in his eyes; and Dab knew there was a quiver in his lip, even if it did not show outside. Ford Foster must have seen it too, for he came to the rescue with,—

“Now, Frank, what I want you to do to-morrow is to just face those fellows, and their nonsense, as if they were nothing more than so many tigers. They’ll do all they can to break us down, and we mustn’t let ‘em do it.”

“I — will — not — let — them — get — the — best of — me,” very slowly and accurately declared Dick Lee; and Frank quietly added, —

“I won’t either.”

He did not feel like saying any thing more just then; for the mention of tigers had indeed brought a memory with it, and there was a picture in his mind’s eye, — a picture of a pale, sweet-faced woman, clasping him to her bosom; and it seemed as if he could hear his father’s voice, saying, —

“I’m half sorry they told you, my dear. He did not flinch or run, though; and so the beast charged right past him, and caught the poor shikaree.”

If the minds of the other boys were busy with home memories, they did not say any more about them than did poor Frank; but the rest of that evening was not at all noisy in that room.

CHAPTER II.

WHY THEY WERE SO SORRY.

OCTOBER is a pleasant month on the seashore, as well as everywhere else ; but everybody knows that November is coming, and that the snow and ice, and the long winter, will keep their regular appointments, one season with another.

The Foster family declared, with one voice, that their prolonged summering on the Long Island shore had been as pleasant as pleasant could be ; but the time had come for them to look up winter-quarters in the great city. In fact, as became him, Mr. Foster had already found exactly the place in which he proposed to shelter his family during the cold weather ; and Mrs. Foster and Annie went and looked at it, and promptly decided that it was an improvement on any other boarding-house they had ever lived in. It was on a street against which no objection could be raised : it was large, elegant, fashionable, and an inquiry into the condition of

the other boarders resulted very satisfactorily. The furniture they had used in the little Kinzer home-stead could be stored, for the greater part, until it should be wanted again; but Mr. Foster said something about having a house of his own to put it in before another year made him older.

There was something distantly akin to mourning in the feeling with which the Kinzer family looked forward at parting with their neighbors, although Mrs. Kinzer felt as though a sort of responsibility were being taken off her hands.

"I'm so glad they've enjoyed themselves," she said to Ham Morris. "But it's a wonder to me that city people should have settled down to country ways, as they've done."

"Hope you'll get just as good a tenant next year," replied Ham. "But I ain't half sure of it."

"Next year? Why, Hamilton, do you suppose I'm going to let my house and all lie idle? We shall move in when they move out."

"And leave me to buy new furniture for this house! Well, now, mother Kinzer, I guess you won't do any thing quite so mean as that. I've got a better plan, a good deal."

"You've got a plan?"

"Yes, I have. I don't see but what you've managed to run your farm about as well from my house as you ever did from your own. It's only over the

fence, you see ; and every thing's just about as near. Some things are even nearer"—

"But I won't let that house lie empty."

It was at the tea-table ; and Ham had insisted on roasted clams, as he was very apt to do ; and the one he had just buttered, and was swallowing, happened to be very hot, so that Miranda had to come to his aid.

"Now, mother, do wait till you hear what he's got to say. We're going to keep you and the girls with us this winter."

Samantha and Pamela and Keziah had no notion of what was coming, but they quite neglected the clams while they were waiting for it.

"Mother Kinzer," said Ham, in a short half-minute, "I met Squire Walters in the village, this very day ; and he asked when lawyer Foster was going to town. 'You see,' said he, 'I'm a-going to build. There isn't any better month than November to lay brick in. I want to set about tearing down my house next week, if I can. Now, if I can get Mrs. Kinzer to give me a fair bargain on her house till spring, I'll be just fixed.' That's how it is, mother Kinzer. He'll lay his brick, and he'll roof in, before cold weather. Then he'll do his finishing in the winter ; and when spring comes you can put in any kind of summer people from the city. By that time you and the girls 'll kind of take root here, and won't care to be transplanted."

“That would do”—

“I told Squire Walters I hadn’t the least doubt in the world but what he could have the house, if he’d pay enough for it. He said he guessed he could do that. The fact is, the squire’s been making a good deal of money, somehow, and he’s a little inclined to have his own way. You’d better let him have it about the house.”

Mrs. Kinzer’s face looked a good deal as if she were disposed to do so, but Samantha had kept still as long as she could.

“I wouldn’t mind him and Mrs. Walters for neighbors, but I don’t know about Jenny. She’d be over here all the while, and she”—

“Now, Samantha,” exclaimed Keziah, “I do hope she will. She’s only a little younger than I am.”

“Nearly four years,” remarked Mrs. Kinzer.

“Mother, she’s fourteen if she’s a day, and I’m not eighteen; and she’s improved wonderfully.”

“The Fosters have let her come there a great deal,” said Pamela. “They really seem to like her.”

“We can have the gate in the fence nailed up,” said Ham, “and I’ll buy a dog. I won’t let one small girl spoil a good bargain. There’s three of you. You needn’t be a bit afraid of Jenny. Don’t you think you’d better consider the matter, mother Kinzer?”

She had done that much already, and before sup-

per was over she had told Ham Morris he might tell Squire Walters she was willing to have a talk with him about it. That meant, as they all knew, that the Kinzer and Morris families were to live in the same house that winter ; and Ham said,—

“ Now that’s settled, Miranda, I’ll try a few more clams. Don’t I wish Dabney could have a roast of ‘em ! ”

That was Thursday evening ; and they little knew in how great a need Dabney stood — or rather lay — of some sort of encouragement. Long after he went to bed, he lay awake, with a large room full of assorted people before his mind’s eye ; and even after he went to sleep he found himself dreaming of delivering speech after speech under all manner of difficulties.

The Friday morning dawned in all the hazy beauty that belonged to it ; but the four boys awoke with a feeling that it was not, and could not be, exactly like other days.

“ Dab,” said Ford, “ don’t you seem to think you feel as if you were going to an examination — or go to jail, or something ? ”

Dab was standing by the open window, slowly buttoning his vest ; and he responded,—

“ Hush, Ford ! Dick Lee’s repeating his piece at the wood-pile. It takes a whole verse of it to pick up two sticks.”

“He’s got the easiest thing of us all,” said Ford: “it’s been spoken every Friday since term began. Last week it came on twice.”

Just then a clear, cheery voice from the adjoining bedroom broke out into, —

“At midnight in his guarded tent
The Turk was dreaming of the hour.”

“I’m so sorry!” suddenly exclaimed Ford, with a deep groan. “Look out, Frank: if we don’t keep a sharp eye on Joe and Fuz and their crowd, we’re gone, that’s all.”

“They won’t dare say any thing aloud,” said Frank; “and I don’t care how many motions they make. I’ll imagine they are Turks and I’m Bozzaris. Let the whole speech right down among them.”

Ford Foster had selected the opening of Cicero’s bitter remarks concerning Catiline; and he became suddenly silent, as if a new idea had struck him. As for Dab, he had risked his oratorical fortunes upon Mr. William Shakespeare’s account of “Clarence’s Dream,” or as much of it as he found in the “Speaker;” but if any thing special occurred to him it was drowned in the thoughts suggested by the sudden ringing of the “first bell” down stairs.

“Late as that?” exclaimed Ford. “Breakfast in fifteen minutes? Something’s the matter with the clock—or with Almira. I must speak to that young

woman. She reads too many novels: I've lent her three of Scott's already."

"Only three?" said Dabney. "Why, she's had nearly every one Samantha sent me. I've had no time to read 'em, except those two of Charles Kingsley's: I could read them all day."

"Lots of going to sea in 'em, and coming home again," said Ford. "Don't eat too much, boys, now, or at dinner either. It might injure your voices."

"Does your father starve himself when he's going to argue a case?"

"No, Dabney: I can't say that he does; but anything sounds louder over something hollow."

"I don't mean to be hollow, then. I can make noise enough for a room of that size."

Neither of the three seemed to think it necessary to neglect his breakfast, when once it was put before him; and Dick Lee fairly astonished them all by the strict correctness of his language whenever they could get him to speak.

"Can you keep it up all day?" said Ford. "Won't you be used up?"

"Guess not. Think what would happen if I should forget when I'm speaking 'Hohenlinden.'"

"It would be awful!"

The day went by in about the usual manner of pleasant Fridays, until the middle of the afternoon found the "great room" of the academy more than

commonly well filled with the audience gathered for the exercises in elocution.

It may have been Dr. Brandegee's idea, in calling on the whole quartet at once, that by so doing he should obtain better results from Dick Lee; but, if so, his precaution was in a manner thrown away, for the young gentleman of color was decidedly the least nervous of them all when the hour of trial came. Perhaps because he regarded it more as a sort of triumph than any thing else, and that he was perfectly sure of his own indifference to any thing which might take place among the audience. It was odd, truly, that Ford Foster, with all his self-confidence, should look around that room with more of internal trepidation than either of his friends.

"There they are,—Joe Hart and Fuz, and Bill Williams, and all their crowd. They've got seats all together. I can see by their faces that they mean mischief of some kind. Don't I wish I knew just what they're up to! The vagabonds!"

There was no sort of regularity in the manner in which the doctor, from his armchair in front of the platform, with his back to the room, called upon his young orators; and after three other youths had repeated, with tolerably good memories and nothing else, the verse or prose they had prepared for the occasion, the next slip of paper picked up by the principal contained the name of Francis Harley.

Frank was prompt in marching forward ; and he faced that room-full of watchful eyes and listening ears as if, in the language of Ford Foster, "It contained really nothing worse than tigers."

What it did contain was pretty bad for him, nevertheless ; for there they all sat, a little to the left of Dr. Brandegee, and behind him ; and, the moment Frank completed the stanza which described the situation of the dreaming Turk, not less than twenty boys put their right hands over their eyes, and bent forward a little. He knew every boy of them was silently telling him, —

"I'm so sorry !"

It was hard to bear, but Frank kept on manfully ; and at the end of the next stanza there was an almost simultaneous sigh among the twenty, and a sudden shifting of the motion of grief to the other hand, while all their lips moved noiselessly at him with, —

"I'm so sorry !"

After that, for some reason, Frank looked across to the other side of the hall, and told all the rest of it, about Bozzaris, to the young ladies.

"Oh, but didn't they do it well !" said Ford Foster to himself. "And Frank stood it like a Mohawk. They sha'n't fetch me down."

Another orator followed, in whose performance Joe and Fuz and their friends seemed to take no

interest ; and then the doctor's voice sounded a little louder than usual as he called for "Mr. Dabney Kinzer."

Dab climbed the platform-steps as bravely as Frank had done ; but the moment he opened his mouth he discovered that his selection was a bad one. No sooner had he exclaimed, in the language of poor Clarence,—

"Oh ! I have passed a miserable night,"—

than every boy in the army of mischief gathered by Joe and Fuz whipped out his white pocket-handkerchief, and went through a pantomime that would have expressed almost any amount of sorrow.

For just one moment Dab stammered. Then he blushed. Then he hesitated. But then a deeper color came into his face, and a sort of metallic ring into his voice, and he went through the remainder of his Shakspearian extract in a way that drew from Dr. Brandegee a distinct nod of approval. There was even a faint sound of stamping, towards the rear of the room, as of applause. It would have been louder, no doubt, if Dick Lee's courage had been just a little greater, and the other boys had backed him.

Ford Foster followed Dab, the very next boy, and he had fully made up his mind what to do. So far as that afternoon's performance went, he was deter-

mined to regard Joe Hart as Catiline; and he at once, with eye and voice and pointing finger, turned upon him the full force of Cicero's invective. Even that, however, came near being his ruin; for his cousin did but bear the situation for half a minute, and then twisted his face into a very complete snivel, as if Catiline himself were repenting, and telling Cicero,—

“I'm so sorry!”

After that the exercises went on soberly enough, for Ford resolutely plodded through his piece, and the declaimers who followed him were let alone; but when, as the last man for the day, Dr. Brandegee summoned “Mr. Richard Lee,” it was evident that a special effort was to be made. Ford Foster must have expected something of the sort; for, when he came down from the platform, he did not return to his former place, but seated himself right at the side of Mr. Joseph Hart, on the front bench.

There was an audible flutter all over the room when Dick walked up, and turned his very black face upon the audience. It was something in the way of a variety, if not a sensation; and Dick's clear, musical voice was well adapted to the well-worn bit of poetry he set out to repeat. He would never have done the half of it if he had not been so well forewarned and fore-armed. The regiment of weepers in front of him looked in his face with mocking grins

and grimaces until the end of each stanza, and then, with all the emphasis of action they dared employ so near Dr. Brandegee, they repeated the "gag" pantomime.

Dick struggled onward bravely, missing the correct pronunciation of a word here and there; but the Hart boys and their friends were a little disappointed over the result of their operations thus far, and they made a dead set at him. They were getting excited, and so was he; and it was well for him that "Linden" was a brief exercise. He threw himself with a sort of slow and careful desperation into the final stanza, not noticing the cautious fingers of Ford Foster, as they slipped under the skirt of Joe Hart's cutaway. They may have held a pin.

"Ah, few shall part where many meet!
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
And every turf beneath their feet
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

"Ah! I'm so sorry," suddenly burst from the lips of Joe Hart, as he sprang to his feet, clapping a hand upon his left thigh as he did so.

"Is you?" responded Dick, like a flash. "I's glad ob dat. It's time you was. I allers t'ought you kep' somet'ing. Was it de mustard?"

His bow to the audience followed, but it was made in the face of an uproar that for a moment puzzled

even Dr. Brandegee. While one of the older students, who had watched the performance, rapidly explained it to the doctor, Dick marched down from the platform; but he was not to slip away as easily as he could have wished. A big, brawny, gray-headed old farmer, a trustee of the academy, strode forward to shake hands with him. Ford had instantly sprung away from a neighborhood which might be dangerous, and was now standing at the farmer's elbow; and Dab and Frank were only a step in the rear, when the deep voice of Dr. Brandegee, and the thunder of his cane upon the floor, called for order. It was quite time; for the shouts and laughter, and clapping of hands, were such as had never till that day terminated any Friday's declamation at Grantley Academy. It was odd, too, that so many, even of the girls, should seem to understand Dick's allusion to the incidents of the fight on the green.

Silence came at the doctor's bidding; but he was too wise a man to ask for over-much of it, under such circumstances, and as soon as he obtained enough to suit him he said, —

“School is dismissed.”

It was, indeed; but Dab Kinzer remarked to Frank Harley, “Did you hear that? This isn't school exactly. Dick has upset him.”

Perhaps it would have sounded better to have said, —

“The exercises are closed for the day;” but the dignified principal had actually laughed with great vigor, and ceased with difficulty, and he was by no means clear in his own mind as to what he should do next.

As for Joe Hart and Fuz, they and theirs had almost immediately started for the door, followed by a confused volume of suppressed sound, from shrill and even girlish voices, through all of which their ears could catch, only too clearly, such dreadful words as,—

“Mustard. Kept it, did you? I’m so sorry!”

“Deacon Robinson”—

“Now, Dr. Brandegee, I came here to-day to find out something about him. He’ll do, he will. Think of buying and selling chaps of his kind, like so many cattle!”

“All that’s gone by, deacon. Sometimes I almost forget there was ever any such thing.”

“I haven’t, then.—Young man, what’s your name?”

“Richard Lee.”

“I’ve got my eyes on you. I mean to keep track of you.—Have you got through here, doctor? If you have I’ll just walk along with you.”

The doctor’s day at the academy was indeed over, and he was glad of a good excuse for not saying anything more to anybody just then. The deacon shook

hands once more with Dick, and the quartet made the best of their way out of the building, while the principal and the grim-faced trustee marched across the green, arm in arm.

“I’ll trust Dr. Brandegee,” remarked Ford Foster. “He won’t tell any thing bad about Richard. Oh, but ain’t that Hart crowd feeling fine just now!”

CHAPTER III.

THE QUARTET FEELS THE POWER OF THE PRESS.

HAM MORRIS had a deal of quiet forethought in his composition, and he had determined to keep himself well-advised of the current doings at Grantley. As one means to that end he had subscribed, almost as a matter of course, to the Grantley "Weekly Bugle." Thereby he let a great excitement in upon the Long-Island shore, in the very midst of the changes which were taking place in the occupancy of the Kinzer homestead.

"The Bugle" was a journal which wisely paid great attention to matters of local interest, with an especial eye to what it called the "cause of education," as personified by the village academy; and it had happened, that, on that eventful Thursday afternoon, there was great hunger for an "item" in the "Bugle" office. The famine had even led "our local reporter,"—who was also the publisher, managing editor, all the other editors, and did some of the

type-setting,—into the “great room” to hear the exercises in elocution. He came for a bite only, and he went away with a full meal; for he had plenty of fun in him, and knew how that thing would be rushed for and read, and how nicely he would be abused for it. Still he had no notion what a sensation he was preparing for the good people on the south shore of Long Island.

Samantha Kinzer was the first to read that number of “The Bugle.” She was apt to be the first, partly because it commonly contained a good deal of poetry, more, sometimes, than all the New York City daily newspapers combined. She read the poetry all through before she turned to the “local items;” but she had not gone very deeply into these before Mrs. Kinzer was startled from her knitting by a sudden cry of,—

“Mother! mother! Just hear this! Oh, that Dick Lee!”

The account of the performances at the academy was certainly a good one, and sufficiently minute. Joe and Fuz Hart and their companions had nothing in the way of neglect to complain of. In fact, when they read that description of their discomfiture they were all of them ready to exclaim,—

“I’m so sorry!”

Mrs. Kinzer listened to the reading, but the effect on her was hardly what Samantha may have expected.

"Keziah," said the widow, "Mrs. Lee is helping the Fosters. Just step over, and say I want to see her. You may tell Mrs. Foster what it's about, and that I'll send her the newspaper."

She had not quite comprehended Mrs. Foster, or Annie either; for they both came to the house inside of five minutes, bringing Glorianna with them, and Samantha had to do her reading over again.

Mrs. Lee was a large woman; but there was not room enough in her for the pride that swelled and swelled, while her ears drank in the graphic account of Dick's oratory and its triumphant closing shot.

"Sho! De boy! Jes' read dat agin, 'f you please, 'bout de way dey stamped an' hollered. De oder boys done well too. I's glad ob dat, but dar can't nobody come up to Dick."

"The first speech he ever made too," said Mrs. Kinzer. "It was mean of those Hart boys to try and break him down."

"Only a joke," said good Mrs. Foster.

"Joke! Yes; but I don't quite understand about the mustard, and the fight on the green. I must ask Dabney about that."

"Has dey been fightin'? My Dick don't fight. He's jes' de bes' boy! Will he be growed much, Miss Kinzer, w'en he gits home? Reckon I'll know him, if he is. Sho, de boy!"

An hour later Annie Foster was showing "The

Bugle" to Jenny Walters, and again there was some curiosity expressed about the fight.

"What can it mean?" said Annie.

"Mean? You don't know Dab Kinzer, then. If any of the other boys tried to impose on Dick Lee, I know just what Dabney would do."

"Of course he would," said Annie. "I never thought of that. And so would Ford."

There was something of a warlike look in the faces of the two girls; but as soon as Jenny went home Annie hunted up her writing-desk, and sat down, in all the confusion of the "moving," to hurry off a sisterly epistle to Ford.

That letter arrived in Grantley at an opportune moment. Ford had it in his hand when he reached his boarding-house, just one week from the day when Dick Lee had won his laurels. Dick was already in the house when Ford and Dab and Frank came hurrying in; and he met them almost at the threshold.

"I's de lan'lady dis afternoon. Mrs. Myers and Miss Almira have gone to sewing-society. We'll git our own supper dis time."

"Richard," said Ford, "I'm not thinking of food, but of you. Your poor mother,—Richard!"

"My moder!"

"Yes,—I'm so sorry,—they've shown her that thing in 'The Bugle.'"

A peal of laughter was the only response Dick could give ; but Ford continued, —

“ And she knows you’ve been fighting.”

“ Then, I have got to write her a full account of it,” said Dick, slowly and soberly. “ But it was you an’ Dab did mos’ ob de fightin’, an’ Frank he put de t’ings in dar pockets.”

“ Ford,” said Dabney, “ who could have sent them that newspaper ? ”

“ I don’t care. Annie doesn’t lecture me a bit ; but she says she hopes we didn’t let ourselves get whipped, and ‘ The Bugle ’ isn’t clear enough about that.”

“ I thought it was.”

“ And our folks are moving to town, and a Mr. Walters is moving into your old house.”

“ Must be Jenny’s father.”

“ Guess so. Annie’s a trump, anyhow. I say, Miss Almira Lee, I mean Mrs. Dick Myers, when’ll supper be ready ? ”

“ At de customary hour, and I nebber wait for nobody. Tell you wot, dough, de pianny’s lef’ open. Miss Almira’s been practisin’ for de society.”

There was nothing wonderful about that piano ; but Mrs. Myers generally kept it locked, either to be sure Almira should not waste too much time on it, or, perhaps, as Ford explained it, —

“ So what little music there was left in it shouldn’t get away.”

For that very reason the quartet had been longing for a chance to try some accompaniments for the queer collection of songs they had from time to time been practising in their own room. Now, therefore, no sooner had Dick stirred up the kitchen-fire than there began a medley of all kinds of piano-music in the usually quiet parlor.

Ford Foster threw the windows open, "so some of the noise could get out;" and in less than five minutes there was a squad of small boys standing by the gate, and another scattered along the fence. Ford saw them when he rose from the "music-stool" to let Frank take his turn.

"Dabney," he exclaimed, "go for your gun."

"There's larger game than that coming," said Dab. "The old lady that lives next door looked right in, and I know she was on her way to the sewing-society."

"We're dished, then. She'll be sure to tell. — Mrs. Lee, is our supper ready?"

"De tea's a-drawin', and I's goin' to make buttered toas'. I da'sn't guess wot she'll say w'en she comes to count de eggs."

"Eggs? Boys, we can't stop for any more music. I've an errand to the hen-house."

"That's the one thing she will not let me do," said Dick. "She gathers the eggs herself."

"Didn't she leave word that we were to get our own supper? Come on, boys."

The egg-box in Mrs. Myers's pantry was as nearly full when she returned as when she went away; but her next morning's visit to the hen-house convinced her that even the best-laying hens sometimes skip a day. Nevertheless the supper the boys made was a good one, and their operations at the piano were of the kind of seed that bears fruit a good while after it is planted.

Nor was that the only seed sown at that very merry table.

"Ford," remarked Dab, "what are you thinking of?"

"That Mrs. Dick Myers has forgotten to give us any johnny-cake. Yes, and of one other thing."

"What's that?"

"Did you hear what I said about your gun? Here we are, four mighty hunters, and only one gun in the house. We must correct that, Dabney."

"Get your father to buy one for you. Wouldn't he?"

"I think he would, if it wasn't for scaring mother. She's dreadfully nervous about fire-arms. Father'd like me to have one. So would mother, if only she didn't know it. She'd know, if I wrote home for one."

"Can't get one here."

"Yes, we can," said Frank. "There's a gun-shop in the village."

"Shop enough. Big wooden gun over the door," said Ford. "But guns cost money."

"Let's go and take a look at the stock after supper," said Dab. "I want a little fixing done on the lock of my gun. We can take Dick along, and help him with his chores when we come back."

The table was left to take care of itself for a while, lest they should be too late at the gun-shop. They might have been, indeed, if the gunsmith had not been detained by a job a little later than usual. Dab's errand came first, and he was told to come for his gun in the morning ; but, even while he talked with the grimy and crusty looking repairer of old fire-arms, Ford and Frank and Dick had been investigating.

"Let them guns alone, young fellers. You don't want to buy any on 'em."

"Don't know 'bout that," said Ford, as he picked up a single-barrelled fowling-piece of tremendous length, with a bell-muzzle and a flint-lock. "If I was rich enough, I'd make sure of this one."

"You may laugh, youngster ; but that thing'll throw more shot, an' throw it furder'n any of the gimcracks they make nowadays. Do you want to buy a gun ?"

"Give you a dollar for this one."

"Don't belong to me."

"Whose is it, then ?"

"I dunno. It was in the shop to be cleaned, when I came here, ten year ago. It's in good condition, flint and all."

"Will she go off?"

"She will that. You don't look as if you hed much money. Tell ye what I'll do. Let ye have it for three dollars, and I'll put a percussion-lock onto it."

"Go with caps?"

"Best kind. You can do all the shootin' there is 'round here."

"Done!" exclaimed Ford. "Boys, I'm an armed man."

Frank Harley discovered that it would not be necessary for him to buy a gun out and out, since he could hire one to use all day for twenty-five cents, and have his pick of at least twoscore, all sorts and sizes.

"No two of 'em alike," remarked Ford. "And if there was, I wouldn't care to be seen carrying either one of those two."

Dick Lee had seen the inside of a gun-shop before, and he had quietly examined that queer collection.

"I knows de gun I wants when I come to hire one," he said to Dabney.

"That short, big-mouthed double?"

"Dat's de gun."

“Best one of the lot. Guess it won’t burst. But what will Ford Foster do with that old Continental?”

Ford himself did not know, as yet; but he looked a good inch shorter than usual, by comparison, while he walked home with his prize on his shoulder.

The promised help was given Dick Lee in clearing up the tea-things. Nothing was left to tell of toast or eggs; but all the while Ford Foster was aching for another look at his wonderful weapon.

“You see,” he exclaimed, “my father’s grandfather was at Bunker Hill; and he fired away all the lead he had, and then walked away. Just like the rest of ‘em. How do I know but what he had this here very gun?”

“Likely as not,” said Dab. “But I’d like to try it on the ducks out in our bay, about this time, or a little later.”

It was a little later that evening when Mrs. Myers and Almira came home. There were no ducks in the back yard; but at the moment when they crossed the threshold, there came a tremendous, thundering report from the upper part of the house, followed by loud exclamations.

“Those boys! Almira!”

“O mother! I wouldn’t dare to go.”

That was precisely the case with her mother; for, if there was one thing in the wide world she he[’]

in utter horror, it was a gun. She had not swept the corner of the room where Dab kept his, since the day he first stood it up there.

“They may have killed themselves.”

“They’d be coming down to tell us if they had.”

Nobody had been killed, indeed ; but one boy had been knocked down very flat.

Ford Foster had gravely estimated the amount of powder and shot required to load that ancient piece, and had been somewhat more than liberal. He had even put the charge in, and rammed it down.

“Dab,” said he, “do you know how a flint-lock goes?”

“Never used one ; but I guess I can make it work. That’s the pan ; don’t you see the touch-hole, going from it into the barrel ? You fill that with powder,” — Ford did that very thing, — “and then you shut that thing down on it to keep it in. That’s priming it, I guess.”

“Then if you cock your gun, and pull the trigger, the flint’ll come down on that steel face, and strike fire ?”

“Never saw it done, but that must be the way of it.”

“That’s it,” said Frank. “I’ve seen the natives work ‘em in India. Some of ‘em even have match-locks, — worse to handle than that is.”

Ford was in great doubt as to whether such a

piece of mechanism could be of any practical value. In fact, his curiosity was too strong to admit of leaving the thing untried ; and in a moment more the bell-muzzle was out of the rear window, and Ford was tugging at the trigger. It had not been pulled in many a long day, and it did not yield easily, but it gave way at last.

Sparks,—a flash,—all the noise one gun could be expected to make. But, oh, what a recoil! It would have kicked over the principal of Grantley Academy ; and it sent Ford Foster down as if he had been a nine-pin.

“Ford, are you hurt?”

“No, Dab ; but I wish you’d take a look at that gun. Did it burst?”

“Burst? No.”

“Then I’m happy. I want to lend it to some fellows I know, and tell them just how much powder to put in.”

“Boys! Boys!”

It was a shrill, anxious voice upon the stairs.

“Boys! Is there any of you killed?”

“No, ma’am,” said Dick Lee dutifully. “Dey’s all right. It was on’y de gun went off.”

“Is that all?—Almira, go up and tell them I won’t have this sort of thing in my house.”

“Now, Mrs. Myers,” politely remarked Ford Foster, as he picked himself up, and walked to the head

of the stairs, "I'll never do it again. You wouldn't, if you were me."

A few additional explanations and promises, and the matter was settled; but Mrs. Myers declared to Almira,—

"It isn't safe to leave 'em alone in the house, and both of us gone. Just look around, and see if they've done any thing else. Shut that piano. Count the eggs."

"Now, mother, they're real nice sometimes. Especially Mr. Kinzer. He did not fire the gun."

"I don't care who fired it. I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUARTET AS A SPORTSMEN'S CLUB.

THE Grantley "Bugle" had done well by Dick Lee. It had not only given him a somewhat remarkable local reputation, and sent to his mother such a supply of family pride, that her neighbors found themselves actually beginning to look up to her: it had also raised around Richard a kind of protecting wall.

"The fact is, boys," said Joe Hart to his chums, in a sort of general council they held in one corner of the green, "we've got to let that fellow alone for a while. I don't want to get myself into the 'Bugle' again,—not this term."

They agreed with him, and it made the outlook for Dick somewhat more peaceable.

As for fame, the one thing they were afraid of, was what Miss Almira Myers longed for; and even her mother felt that she could never again regard her young colored friend in precisely the light she had put him in before he became a man of note.

"Almira," she said, "you'll have to write a good deal of poetry before you can have folks talking about you in that way."

Almira felt it; but the nail was driven in to the very head, the following Sunday, when Deacon Robinson himself stopped them on the steps of the meeting-house, to say, —

"Sister Myers, I'm going to take dinner with you next Sunday. I want to get better acquainted with your young boarders. It's a great credit to you, sister Myers, the kindness you're showing to that colored boy. I honor you for it. I've taken a deep interest in him. You are sure of your reward for all that sort of work, sister Myers."

If Dick had been her own son, not many times removed, Mrs. Myers could not have given a better account of him, and the grim old trustee was more than satisfied. The most important consequence to Dick, however, that came right away, was a promise given on her return home, that he should have the following Saturday all to himself, to go anywhere he might please.

"Dick," said Ford Foster, when the joyful news was reported up stairs, "don't you think you'll please to go a-hunting?"

"Guess I will. De gun" —

"Now, Dick," said Dabney, "don't you worry about your gun. I've cords of powder and shot."

"I'll go. Guess I will. On'y I's 'feard we won't kill no game. Not any to speak of."

There was reason for a fear of that kind; and none of the quartet knew much, as yet, of the shooting around Grantley. The repairs on Dab's gun-lock had required five days of waiting instead of one, as a matter of course; and Ford had not yet ventured to put a second load into his fowling-piece. He had taken it back to the gunsmith, however, the very next morning; and it now rejoiced in a new percussion-lock, and the rust had been "rimmed out" of the barrel.

"It won't kick now," he had been assured: "that is, if you don't put too much powder in. You'll find it'll throw shot awful."

Before the end of that week, news arrived from the great city that Ford's family were well settled in their winter-quarters.

"Trust father for that," said Ford. "But I do wish I'd been there."

Dabney had also a letter from his mother, and another from Samantha, which he answered, both of them, with more than usual care.

"Now Jenny Walters is our next-door neighbor," he said to himself, "I suppose I mustn't send her any more messages. But what does Sam mean by asking if I wrote any of that poetry in the 'Bugle'? What can she think of me? I never showed her any."

He never had, indeed ; but a boy's elder sisters are apt to know more of his weaknesses than he has any idea of, and Dabney had not always been as careful as he might of his stray papers. It was an unwise question on the part of Samantha, for it put into her brother's head an ambitious and dangerous new thought. He could not do any thing with it that week ; but it came back to him again and again, with a kind of fever and chill that almost made him shake.

Richard Lee was wonderfully good that week, and so, for some reason, were his three friends. Mrs. Myers thought she could see very positive signs of improvement in all of them.

"There's nothing like education," she said to Almira. "Just see what it's doing for those boys."

"Especially for Mr. Kinzer. I wonder how it would do for him to be invited to the sewing-society in the evening, one of these days ?"

"Almira, it wouldn't do at all. We tried letting in the academy boys once. They came in the middle of the afternoon next time, and we had to give it up. We can't even let them come to Mr. Fallow's donation."

"Not there, of course. They'd just eat up every thing."

It was a matter of course that each and every settled minister in and about Grantley should have

a "donation" party before Christmas, of any given year; and that of Mr. Fallow had been announced as the first one for the coming season. The year before, he had been the last on the list, and the result had been unsatisfactory.

That, however, was in the dim future, weeks and weeks ahead; and Almira had come home alone from two sewing-societies in succession. Dabney Kinzer was so tall for his age, and he was so still and dignified in company, nobody would guess that he was not yet sixteen years old; and then he had already been spoken of in "The Bugle."

So had Dick Lee, for that matter, and yet nothing was said of his value for social purposes. Dick was at the gunsmith's three times in the course of that week; and the result was, that his first choice, the snub-nosed double-barrelled gun, was turned over to Frank Harley, while Dick contented himself with a lighter piece, old and still single, which, he was assured by the gunsmith, would—

"Just pitch small shot spiteful. Kill any thing round here. There isn't any game short of the mountains. You may git some blackbirds."

The quartet had passed a unanimous vote that no fellow was to be permitted to get ahead of them in their several classes; and Ford Foster did some of his studying that week with his long gun lying across his lap.

“You see,” he remarked, “we must set a good example. If we don’t, the fellows that can’t go a-hunting will be making remarks.”

That was the very thing they did when Saturday of that week came around.

They “went a-hunting.” No other words would have expressed it half so well. They started bright and early, hardly anybody getting a sight of them as they marched away from Mrs. Myers’s front gate; and they drew straws for the first shot before they were out of the village. Frank Harley drew the longest straw; and Ford lifted his own heavy length of cold iron to his shoulder again, with the remark,—

“I’m glad it wasn’t me. Your first tiger always gets away, somehow.”

That was not to be the good fortune of the first wild animal that crossed their path that day; for they had only toiled half a mile beyond the brow of the nearest hill, before they all stopped suddenly, as if they had been shot.

“Hit him, Frank. He’s sitting still. Hit him.”

“What, that little thing?”

“First game, you know. We’re to take every thing that comes.”

“Chipmunk!” chuckled Dick Lee. “Dey’s good eatin’.”

Frank’s aim was good; and in a moment more

a somewhat battered and disfigured little ground-squirrel was dangling at the end of a string, and Ford Foster said,—

“If your next is an elephant, they won’t compare well.”

There was a little excitement, a few minutes later, over an unsuccessful attempt by Dabney to hit a meadow-lark on the wing, and then Dick Lee gathered upon his curly head the envy of his friends.

“Hush-sh-sh!” exclaimed Ford, as they peered over a fence into a bit of woods. “Oh, if it was only my turn!”

“Woodchuck! Out of his hole at this time of day. Dick!”

“I’ll git ‘im, Cap’n Dab.”

Bang! for Dick was quick about it, and he “got him.”

“Ain’t he fat! But what’ll we do with him? Nobody eats woodchucks,” said Ford.

“Good as chipmunks,” said Frank.

“I’s goin’ to take ‘im home to Miss Almiry,” chuckled Dick. “Mebbe she’ll write some po’try on him for de ‘Bugle.’ ”

“My turn now,” groaned Ford. “And there’s more game in the village than there is out here. This gun of mine’s the heaviest thing to carry, you ever heard of.”

“Can’t help that,” said Dab. “What if you were

marching to Bunker Hill? Think of your great-great-grandfather."

"Yes; but I guess he must have had a wagon or something to carry his gun for him. Hullo, boys! look at that crow."

"Crow! Where?"

"Way over in that cornfield. Sitting on the scarecrow."

"He's trying to make up his mind which of those cornstalks he'll go for. You can't hit him. They never let a fellow with a gun come within shot of 'em."

"I'll poke along the fence, and try."

"Go ahead: we'll wait for you."

"Crows are game," said Ford, as he slipped away. "It's only a mile from the fence to the scarecrow, and this gun of mine'll reach pretty nigh half way."

There might be some exaggeration about both these estimates; but the crow sat perfectly still, although he must have seen the four young sportsmen. Perhaps he had been shot at before, and knew about how far the ordinary Grantley shot-gun would carry. If so, he would have done well to have learned something about old Continental bell-muzzled fowling-pieces; for in three minutes, or thereabouts, Ford Foster was bringing one to bear upon him over a tumble-down stone-wall.

"I'll wedge it into the crack a little," said Ford to himself. "Then maybe it won't kick so bad."

There was sense in that, and the wall helped him steady the gun. Slowly and surely he engineered the pointing of that weapon, until he felt sure of his aim.

“I just hate to pull that trigger. Wonder if it’ll kick much.”

He had his doubts, too, about the new lock; but it surprised him a little. It did not take a quarter as much pulling as the old one, and the gun went off while he was “sighting,” and making up his mind about firing.

“I declare! It hardly kicked at all. Did I hit that crow?”

A great shout came to his ears from up the road.
“Hurrah! Crow! Hurrah!”

It was a fact. No other gun in the quartet would have done it; but the bell-muzzle had won the prize, and the crow lay fluttering at the foot of his vagabondish perch.

“That farmer’ll save something of his crop now, thanks to me,” said Ford, when he picked up his gun. “But what will mother Myers say to this bird?”

“She’ll cook him for you,” said Dabney. “We’re getting what they call an assortment. I’m the only unlucky man.”

“You’ve had as much hunting as any of us,” said Frank Harley. “You may carry my chipmunk.”

Another mile, and then another, until it began to seem as if all the squirrels must have migrated, and the birds been warned that the quartet was coming, when a turn of the road they had crossed the fields into, brought them in view of something that had a sort of promise in it.

"Pond!" exclaimed Dick Lee.

"Millpond. Swamp all round it. Boys," said Ford, "it's a warm day. If the water isn't too cold, let's have a swim."

"That isn't all," exclaimed Dabney. "See the wheat-fields beyond, and the clouds of blackbirds in the bushes on the other side."

"But we can't get at them," almost groaned Ford Foster.

"Let's see'f we can't."

The antiquated millpond, at the bottom of the slope they were descending, was long and irregular in shape. There was little over two acres of it; and the sawmill, or what was left of it, by the decaying dam, had not been doing any work for years and years. All the better for the noisy swarms of blackbirds, who had chosen to gather in the thick bushes on the swampy ground along the farther bank. The place was handy to so many grain-fields, and they were so little likely to be disturbed. At the point where the quartet reached the pond, it was only six or seven rods wide.

"Boys," exclaimed Ford Foster, "let's blaze away! We can't miss if we try."

"Hold on," shouted Dabney. "Half into the bushes, and the other half into the flock when it rises. All ready? Now, then!"

"Blaze away" it was; Dab and Frank firing their second barrels as the startled birds rose in the air.

"How many did we kill?" said Ford excitedly. "I saw bushels of 'em fall."

"Can't tell," said Dabney. "Hurry, and load up. They'll settle again."

"Oh, no, they won't!"

It was a little queer, but they did, just that once, a good deal as if they had not made up their minds what to do; and the boys had an opportunity to fire again, with extra allowances of shot. After that the birds seemed to understand the matter better, and flew away across the fields in frightened squads.

"How'll we git at 'em, Cap'n Dab?" asked Dick Lee.

"Over the dam. There isn't three inches of water on it anywhere. We can wade that."

Shoes and stockings were off in a twinkling, and they found even less of a flood to cross than Dab had guessed at; but there was deeper wading to be done among the bushes, before they found and picked up all the victims of what Ford Foster called "our cannonade."

"Boys," said Frank Harley, when at last they piled their game in a heap on the bank, "how much shot did we send over?"

"Twelve barrels of it," said Ford.

"Gun-barrels," remarked Dabney. "Now, boys, we'd better go home. I can't guess how far it is. Fifty-three blackbirds, one crow, one woodchuck, one chipmunk,—if that isn't glory enough for one day, I'd like to know what is."

"Dey's de bes' kind ob eatin'," said Dick Lee.

Very likely; but then, that was the longest kind of a march home. The boys wondered if it would really have seemed longer to them in case they had had nothing to carry. As Ford put it:—

"Suppose we hadn't killed any game, and had lost our guns. I wish mine had wheels."

They were a tired-out lot of boys when they reached the kitchen-door, and showed their prizes to Mrs. Myers and Almira.

"Mother, what can we do with them?"

"The blackbirds? Why, pot-pie, of course, for to-morrow. We won't want 'em all. I'll send a dozen to Deacon Short."

"That's fair," suddenly exclaimed Ford. "Dick Lee'll take 'em right over now, while the rest of us go to work picking the birds for the pot-pie. Is supper most ready, Mrs. Myers?"

"It'll be ready by the time Dick gets back. Almira, come in. We must get it a little early."

She was somewhat gratified by so prompt a response to her suggestion about the extra dozen of blackbirds ; but she did not see Mr. Richard Lee when he walked out of the front gate. He carried an assorted cargo.

“We won’t be mean, Richard,” said Ford, at the corner of the house. “He may have the crow, and all. Be sure you tell him it is with Mrs. Myers’s compliments. He’s a very good man.”

He had need to be, when he came to look at the string of game he received from “sister Myers,” and wonder what she meant by it.

“Can she really suppose I’d eat a woodchuck ? The blackbirds ain’t so bad, though. Wonder if it’s any kind of a hint about Elder Fallow’s donation. I’ll see about this.”

Dab and Frank had quietly assented, going right along with their “picking,” while Ford and Dick arranged the gift-string ; and by the time Dick returned they were all ready to wash the powder from their grimy hands and faces, and go in to supper.

The next day Deacon Robinson walked home from meeting with Mrs. Myers ; and she had no chance to say any thing to the boys till they met at the dinner-table, and everybody was praising the blackbird pot-pie.

“Hope Deacon Short’s is as good as this,” unwisely remarked Frank Harley.

That was a little too much. Mrs. Myers had intended to wait, but she could not do it.

"Mr. Foster, I saw Deacon Short after meeting. He told me the whole thing. I knew nothing about it, and I said so. It was wicked. A crow!"

"Richard Lee," exclaimed Ford, "didn't you pluck that bird before handing it in?"

"And a woodchuck, and a chipmunk!"

"And a dozen blackbirds!"

"Mrs. Myers," interrupted Deacon Robinson, "do you mean to say they took that string to brother Short?"

"Dick Lee did, and I sent him; and I had to explain"—

The grim trustee needed no sort of explanation. It had clearly been a long time since he had laughed, and his jaws were a little rusty; but laugh he did, and Mrs. Myers almost snappishly remarked,—

"I don't see any fun in it. A parcel of mischievous boys. To think of you, Deacon Robinson! And Deacon Short too! He laughed harder'n you're doing, when he found out how it was."

Somewhere or other, 'hid away among the rust and old lumber and dust of the grimdest and sternest men, there is a relic of the fact, that once—it may be ever so long ago—they were boys.

If any man exists out of whom all the boy has

gone, and who can't understand boys, or who can't laugh, he is terribly to be pitied, and, as a general thing, to be avoided.

"It did him good, that laugh," said Ford Foster, after they reached their room. "I never saw a man eat more pot-pie, or any thing else, than he did, after he got over it. Settled Mrs. Myers too; and I'm proud of Deacon Short. I knew he was a good man."

CHAPTER V.

A GRAND THANKSGIVING DAY.

THAT was a magnificent October; but nobody could have expected, reasonably, that the November which followed it would fade away in such a perfect dream of Indian summer.

“If we boys don’t deserve credit,” was Ford Foster’s wise comment on all that good weather, “then nobody in all the wide world does.”

“W’ot for?” asked Dick Lee.

“What for? Why, here it is beyond the middle of the month, and Thanksgiving Day a-coming, and we haven’t played hookey a day. Done all our fishing and hunting on Saturdays.”

“Yes,” said Dabney,—for they were all gathered in their “studio,” as Ford had finally named it,—“yes, but think of the luck we’ve had. Why, among us, we’ve killed three kinds of squirrels.”

“Since Deacon Short’s mess.”

“And a partridge, and nearly a dozen quail.”

"Oh, yes! and we fired into a flock of wild geese."

"Half a mile overhead," said Frank; "and they only looked down and laughed at us."

"And now," said Dabney, "here we are all invited out to Deacon Robinson's to eat Thanksgiving turkey, and, he says, 'pigeons.'"

"A roost of 'em," sighed Ford, as if the earth could offer no greater treasure than a pigeon-roost, to sportsmen such as they.

That was the exact state of the case. The result of important councils held in the great city, and on the Long Island shore, had been that the boys were not to come home for Thanksgiving.

Dab's sisters and Annie Foster had argued the other way; but their seniors had unanimously decided, in one form or another, that "the boys are doing well, and it wouldn't be right to interrupt their studies in that way, with the Christmas holidays so near."

The decision had at first been received a little dismally in the "studio" at Grantley; but Dick Lee had had no idea of going home, and Frank Harley was glad enough not to be left alone.

"Will Mrs. Myers have turkey?" had been a question solemnly discussed by the quartet; but, even before a decision could be reached, the cordial invitation of Deacon Robinson settled the matter.

"His boys and girls are mostly grown up," said Miss Almira. "But his house is a big one, and they'll all be there."

"And Mrs. Robinson makes the best mince-pies in the world," added her mother.

"Please don't say any more, Mrs. Myers," interrupted Ford Foster, at that point. "I can't bear it, somehow."

The whole thing could be gone over and over, however, after the invitation was accepted; and the cap-stone was put upon the whole affair now, by a message from the grim trustee, bidding the boys bring along their guns; for his son — the only one left at home — had reported a pigeon-roost, not a large one, but big enough for them, only a few miles back among the hills. It was finally decided that they need not take any barrels with them to bring their pigeons home, on the ground that if Deacon Robinson were out of barrels, he must, at least, have bags, and they were sure his lumber-wagon was a large one, with a deep box.

Something like heroism was called for in the efforts the quartet had to make with reference to their duties at the academy, during those remaining days; but Dr. Brandegee himself could have found no fault with them. Perhaps, however, even Deacon Robinson did not know to whom he and the boys were indebted for that invitation to dinner.

Dr. Brandegee had thought of it for them, and he had a way of his own of doing things without letting people know too well just how he did them.

Every school in the nation closes its doors on Thanksgiving Day; and where the trustees and other authorities are wise, as in Grantley, the day before is given to go home in, and the day after to come back, at least in country places, and where any considerable number of the goers have far to go.

It was not far to Deacon Robinson's, only five or six miles north, towards the "rough country;" but it was a trial to the boys that his big wagon did not come for them until the forenoon of that great Thursday. They had played ball nearly all day of Wednesday, and spent most of the evening looking at their guns, and counting their pigeons; and they were all up and dressed very early on Thursday morning. Thanksgiving Day always comes on a Thursday, rain or shine; and there never was a sunnier, hazier, more perfect day, than that, with a surer promise that everybody would be hungry by dinner-time.

"It's all very fine," remarked Ford; "but there won't be any time left to kill pigeons."

There was a gloomy sort of silence after that, nor was the shadow of it entirely removed until long after their arrival at the big, rambling old farmhouse. Then, indeed, the clouds were broken; for the deacon himself said, —

"The pigeon-roost? Oh! you won't touch that to-day. I mean to keep you over night, and Bob and I'll go with you in the morning."

From that moment the Robinson house and farm took on a new aspect, and the quartet was almost contented. Not a boy of them had ever been in just such a place before, and even Ford Foster admitted that he was learning something new.

"Dab," he said, "this isn't just like your farm, or Ham's either."

"Not exactly. Stone enough on every acre to fence it in, and all the fences are made that way. Must have taken work, though."

So it had; and there is no telling how much of the manhood of New England has been developed in laying stone-wall.

"There's nothing like this in India," said Frank Harley. "You ought to see a jungle, just once."

"Jungle enough," said Ford, "up yonder among the hills. That's where the pigeon-roost is. It's only about eight miles, Bob Robinson says. He says nobody's been near 'em with a gun yet; but, as soon as it's known, there'll be a crowd."

"Guess we'll get our share first, den," said Dick Lee; and the assenting head-shakes, all around, carried with them the idea that there would not be much of a roost left for other sportsmen to shoot at.

The barns, the orchards, the cider-mill, and the

other local attractions filled up the time until the great tin-horn was blown at the kitchen-door, and every soul within hearing of it knew that dinner was ready.

"The dining-room's big enough for a small hotel," was Ford's comment on entering it; and Dab was inwardly remarking, —

"There's a tribe of 'em. Our crowd's nowhere."

The boys had already made a sort of general acquaintance with Deacon Robinson's family-gathering, especially with Bob; but the sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandchildren, nephews, cousins, nieces, had been a good deal too busy with each other to pay any considerable attention to a lot of strangers. The young people, indeed, were a little shy at first, with a dim idea that the quartet was composed of "city boys." They looked with particular awe upon Frank Harley, as a boy who had already, at so early an age, seen idols, and, it might be, seen a heathen, or been one, or been eaten up by them. It was needful, really, that they should see him pass his plate for more turkey, before they could make up their minds what to do with him. As for Dick Lee, they all knew that grandfather Robinson had been an abolitionist in his younger days, and had served as a soldier in the great civil war. Bob luggered out both facts pretty loudly before dinner was over, and the deacon looked at Dick Lee while he talked about it.

"It's all right now," he said. "I didn't understand it in those days,—not till I went down among 'em. The people of them States are just our folks, living South, and they don't know it. And it'd be a good thing for them if they'd git it into their heads that we're just their folks, living North. I learned that much from the fellows that took me prisoner."

"I don't see why they can't agree better now, then," remarked Mrs. Myers.

"Don't you?" said the deacon. "I do, then. It's just because both sides are made up of our folks. Next time we have a church-meetin', you just watch."

"Dab," almost whispered Ford, "do you know any thing about politics?"

"Well, no, not much."

"Tell you what, then, we must join the debating-society. We're old enough."

"If I eat much more, I sha'n't be able to speak, not to-day."

"Take it easy, Dab. The mince-pie is coming, and Bob said there'd be plum-pudding."

Nevertheless, Deacon Robinson had done a thing for which Dr. Brandegee would have thanked him. He had set four boys to thinking, as they never thought before, that they were citizens of a great country, and would have to vote one of these days. They might have to fight too; for, right there at

the head of the table was a man who had been in many battles, and had been wounded, and promoted, and taken prisoner ; and, before dinner was over, they learned that his oldest son, and others of the Robinson family, had not returned to the New England hills from their duty as citizen-soldiers.

“Ain’t I proud to know such a man !” said Ford to Frank.

“He isn’t a bit mean about it, either,” said Frank. “Did you hear what he said about the soldiers on the other side ?”

“It was just grand,” said Dab. “And he looked so, while he was talking.”

Who would have expected so much charity and common-sense from the grim old trustee, with his strong prejudices and his iron jaws ? Somehow or other the boys understood the matter ; and it was a lesson neither of them would or could ever forget. It was almost worth a term of schooling at Grantley Academy ; for too many young fellows go through their books, and get to be twenty-one, and never get it into their heads that they are a kind of king, with the ruling of a great country upon their shoulders.

It was a grand dinner, and a long one ; and before it was over Dick Lee found a chance to say, without being overheard, —

“Cap’n Dab, jes’ don’t I wish Mrs. Myers’d git to know how to make dis kin’ ob pie.”

“Guess she knows now.”

“Den she’s out ob practice.”

“There comes the plum-pudding. All on fire, just as it should be. That’s the way mother makes ‘em.”

And with that, Dabney was suddenly silent : for there came vividly before his mind’s eye a picture of the dining-room at home, as it must be at about that hour of the day ; and he could almost persuade himself that he heard his mother say,—

“How I do wish Dabney could be here ! He was always so fond of plum-pudding.”

Thought Dabney, —

“I’ll write her all about this, so she’ll know I had a good time.”

The dinner somehow thawed away all the ice there was under the Robinson roof ; and, from that time forward, the quartet were treated a good deal as if they had been members of the family.

The greater part of the gathering had homes within a few miles, and would return to them that night ; but none of these dreamed of going until the evening had been spent in what Deacon Robinson described as “a right-down, old-fashioned good time.” The fun was even uproarious, before he seemed quite satisfied ; and he insisted upon his young guests taking an active part in it. Ford Foster admitted to his friends, —

"We don't do things this way in the city ; but if I could have my choice!" —

The expression of his mouth and eyes left no doubt as to what his choice would be ; and Dick Lee, whose part had been largely confined to looking on, and grinning with delight and bashfulness, responded, —

"Dey's jes' de bes' kind ob folks."

So they were ; and, when it was all over, the quartet was led to a great, low-ceilinged chamber, with two beds in it, for such a night of sleeping as not everybody can hope for after such a dinner.

It was very early the following morning when Bob Robinson hammered at that chamber-door.

"Get up, boys. We must eat, and be off. Father can't go with us. Breakfast's ready for you."

"Boys," said Ford, after he replied to Bob's hail, "we ought to have gone to bed with our clothes on."

Dabney's were half on already, for he had sprung to his feet at the first sound of Bob's fist on the door ; and the rest were but little behind him.

Dick Lee did not know it ; but at that very moment his mother was remarking to his father, —

"I's jes' suah he's been habin' a good time. Dey'll be mighty kerful ob a boy like him. But I tell you wot, all de same, I don't want to eat anoder Fanksgibin' widout Dick. It was jes' de awfullest day."

“Sho, now,” said old Bill Lee. “Isn’t I heah?
Isn’t I somebody?”

“You is; but you isn’t Dick.”

That was true; and even Mrs. Kinzer herself, with Ham Morris and Miranda, and with Samantha and Keziah and Pamela, to keep her company, had passed a lonely sort of holiday. No doubt Ford and Frank had also been missed, and thought about, and talked about: for they, too, had mothers; and mothers are all alike about some things, especially when they have only one boy apiece.

Bob Robinson had finished his breakfast when the boys came down stairs, and was out at the barn getting the wagon ready. It was almost a disappointment, when it came to the door, that it was a one-horse wagon, and shorter than common.

“It’s just the thing for those rough hill roads,” said Bob. “I move we try if we can’t pretty near fill it with pigeons.”

Guns, ammunition, a basket of cold turkey and mince-pie for luncheon, were hurried into the wagon, and there was no need for Bob to hurry the quartet. He was in something of an excitement himself, and he had added the deacon’s big double duck-gun to the list of weapons.

“Wish we had some of these new-fashioned breech-loaders,” he said. “When the birds are flying thick, it’s awful aggravating to have to stop and load.”

The horse was a good one, as well adapted to rough work as was the vehicle behind him ; and Bob had no scruples against fast travelling. Still those eight miles were a little the longest, for their size and kind, that any one of that crowd had ever travelled ; and it was not easy even to talk. Perhaps there would hardly have been any conversation, but for Bob's desire to hear more about the way ducks were killed on the Long Island shore from Dab, and tigers in India from Frank. Dick and Ford were quite satisfied to sit still and listen.

"It's only a mile now," said Bob at last. "There goes a squad."

"Pigeons ? Where ?"

"There's another. I see 'em."

"They're flying first-rate. We're in for a good time."

So they were ; although there was nothing very sportsman-like about it,—only the strange excitement male human beings always take in the capture or destruction of what they are pleased to set down as "wild game," of any kind whatever. The "roost" was not a large one, such as is sometimes described in the newspapers ; but it was altogether too large for that party to make much of an impression upon.

"To think," said Dab Kinzer, "of all this within fifteen miles of a village like Grantley !"

"It wouldn't be here long," said Bob, "if all Grantley knew of it. Don't you see what a lonely, wild place it is, and what an awful rough, solitary kind of road we came by? Nobody ever comes out this way. I'd never have known the roost was here myself, if I hadn't met a fellow that found it while he was out here a-shooting."

Very little talking could be done after the horse was once hitched to a tree, and the hunters had their guns in their hands. It was "load and fire," from that time on; and, although the birds were a little wild, there was no need of throwing shot away.

The ground was rough and rocky, and the forest pretty thick, so there was plenty of exercise in getting around; and by noon they were all ready for the cold turkey and the pies.

"We needn't kill any more, if we don't want to," remarked Bob. "I've got more now than our folks can use up, or the neighbors either. What are you going to do with all of yours?"

"Do? said Dabney thoughtfully. "Didn't you know that Elder Fallow's donation comes off next Wednesday?"

"Of course I did."

"Well, then, the more pigeons he has, ready cooked, the more he can save of any thing else they send him. They'll keep, fine, if he'll get a little ice, and be careful."

"Of course they will. I hadn't thought of that. Pity we couldn't keep enough over for the other donations when they come. We could go right on shooting."

"What do you say, boys?" asked Dab. "Will that do?"

"Jes' de t'ing," said Dick.

"It has my warmest approval," solemnly remarked Ford Foster. "I was wondering how we would work it, to get an invitation. You've solved the problem."

Bob Robinson joined Frank Harley's laugh at Ford's interpretation of Dab's "charity;" but Dab went calmly on,—

"We can stand a good many birds at our house, if we try; and, if there's any left over, I'll back Mrs. Myers to find some one to give 'em away to."

"Boys," said Ford, "we must kill some more. I'd forgotten how many friends she had, and how liberal she can be."

They had a surprise before them, nevertheless; for when at last, late in the afternoon, they stopped in front of Deacon Robinson's farmhouse to unload, as they expected, they learned that Mrs. Myers and Almira had already gone home with a son of their host, who resided on the farther side of the township.

"Bob can take you right to the village," said the

deacon. "I hope you've had a good time. Mean to have you out here again some day."

They did their very best, and he saw they did, to express just how good a time it had been to them; but every boy of them felt that they had failed.

Bob tumbled out his share of the game in such a heap that his father told him to stop, for there was more than any use could be made of; and then it was explained to him in what manner a large part of the remainder was to be bestowed.

"The donation!" exclaimed the deacon. "I hadn't thought of that. They'll be just the thing. I'll send over Mrs. Robinson, and somebody else, to help Mrs. Fallow pick and cook 'em. It'll be a sort of treat. Something new. How the folks will eat 'em!"

That is, cold game at a minister's donation-party would be something out of the common way, and therefore sure to be popular.

There was a vigorous hand-shaking, and more thanks from the boys; and then Bob's horse was stirred up again on a smart trot for Grantley.

"We'll attend to Elder Fallow first," said Ford Foster. "I want to get him off my mind. I've too many pigeons on it, anyway."

When Bob pulled up in front of the minister's house, Mrs. Fallow was at a front window; and in a moment more she was calling her husband out of his study.

"My dear! Those four boys again! They're coming right in. Do come out and see them."

"When shall I find time to finish this sermon?" almost groaned the poor preacher, for he had been much interrupted of late; but he forgot every thing else, and so did his wife, when that very peculiar "donation" was landed on the grass by the front doorstep.

"Now, husband!"

"My dear young friends"—

"Elder Fallow," said Bob, as if he had suddenly remembered something, "father says they'll keep first-rate, with a little ice; and mother and Aunt Janè'll come over and help cook 'em."

"What will we do with so many?"

"There won't a single one be left over. I can eat two myself."

Dab and his friends were in a hurry to get away, and so was Bob; and little Mrs. Fallow did not have a chance to say half she wished to "those boys." She beamed upon them, however; and they had to blush and bow, and get out of it the best way they could.

"Now, boys," said Ford, "we'll astonish Mrs. Myers and Almira. Can we make 'em believe these are blackbirds?"

They were just getting into the wagon at that moment, unnecessary as was any more riding, and

they suddenly heard Elder Fallow's voice at the gate. He had rushed from the house again, bareheaded, to shout to them, —

“My dear young friends, I shall expect to see every one of you next Wednesday evening. I shall feel disappointed if you do not come.”

“We will all come,” replied Dabney.

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUARTET TRIUMPHS IN SOCIETY.

MRS. MYERS and Almira had really expected that the quartet would bring some pigeons home with them ; for the former had said, —

“ If they do not kill any, Bob Robinson will ; and the deacon is a liberal sort of man.”

Great was their astonishment, however, when the actual results of the trip to the “ roost ” were laid before them, and the boys found that they had by no means over-estimated, either their landlady’s willingness to have her own table supplied, or her disposition to distribute among her favorite neighbors whatever birds she could see no home use for. It was a little odd that she should overlook the minister in naming the gifts : but, as she said to Almira, —

“ He? Pigeons? They’ll be sending him more poultry than he’ll know what to do with.”

How was she to have guessed that a precisely similar argument, in the minds of many other mem-

bers of Mr. Fallow's flock, had so far reduced the donations of the kind referred to, that the load of wild birds brought in by her boarders was exceptionally welcome?

The quartet cared very little where the superfluous pigeons went to, after they had made sure of a string for Dr. Brandegee, and Dick had been directed to deliver them. As by common consent, nevertheless, they kept silence concerning the donation-party and their invitation.

"The fact is, boys," said Ford, after they got upstairs, "we want to be our own crowd, and go alone. We must lie low till Wednesday evening."

The remainder of that one was consumed by all hands in the preparation of wonderful letters home, detailing their Thanksgiving-Day experiences; and one of those letters had a consequence.

"Mother," said Annie Foster, after Ford's account of the Robinson farmhouse and the "roost" had been opened and read, "I think Ford owes Dab Kinzer some kind of a return."

"My dear, so he does. So do we all, and to his mother and the girls."

"Ought we not to invite him here for the winter holidays?"

"Mrs. Kinzer would not spare him, my dear."

"For a few days,—on his way home, or on his way back?"

"I would be glad to have him. So would your father. I will write to Mrs. Kinzer myself."

She did; and Annie wrote to Ford a letter which came within a few inches of being directly addressed to Dabney, so much of it was "invitation," and neither she nor her mother knew just what or how much of it they were doing.

Annie's missive arrived in Grantley on the following Wednesday morning; and it came pretty near driving out of Dab Kinzer's head, not only his lessons for the day, but the thought of the "donation."

Ford read it to him, and then handed it over for him to read with his own eyes.

"Won't that be grand, Dab?"

"If mother gives her consent"—

"Consent? If she doesn't, I'll send my mother and Annie right over to Long Island. Why, Dab, I'll go myself. She'll say 'yes,' you see if she doesn't."

Dab could think of no good reason why she should object, but he had long since learned that his mother had a mind of her own; and then, as he said to Ford,—

"The fact is, it's almost too good to be true. There isn't any thing else I'd like quite so well as that. Anyhow, you must write, and thank Annie and your mother for me."

"Not till we hear from your folks. Come on,

Dab. There goes the old bell. We'll be late if you don't hurry."

Dr. Brandegee had succeeded in cultivating among the students of that academy a strong prejudice against being late, but Dab's haste that morning was more of the body than of the mind. He could not have explained why it was that the idea of a visit to the great city should have taken so strong a hold of him, and shaken him up so badly. Perhaps because he was not aware that he had already dreamed of such a thing,—wide-awake dreaming,—and permitted himself to dream of the things he and Ford had sometimes talked about, but which he had never seen, and hardly dared to hope he should ever see.

"Dick'll go home," he said, as they walked briskly across the green; "he and Frank got away before we did, this morning, somehow. About Frank"—

"And Christmas? Didn't you know? Uncle Joe Hart invited him there, long ago; and now he's got three other invitations, and wants to get out of it. Think of him away off there, all alone, with Joe and Fuz to torment him. He mustn't do it. They'd half kill him before they got through, and say they were joking."

That was a matter, indeed, which came up again after school; and Frank Harley very cordially agreed with the view taken of it by his friends.

"I've about made up my mind," he said. "I can

tell Mr. Hart my father wants me to go and see one of the gentlemen that have sent me invitations. That'll be excuse enough. It's in almost the last letter I've got,—last but one. The Harts won't care."

"Joe and Fuz will. Oh! but wouldn't they like to get a fair chance at you? Or at any one of us, and the others not there?"

"They won't get any at me if I can help it," said Frank. "Now, boys, what are we in for this evening?"

"All there is a-going," said Ford. "We must do the fair thing by the people of Grantley."

It was plain that he, for one, had no misgivings about his capacity to shine in society. It was a thing he had frequently done before, and in much more stylish assemblies than the donation-party was likely to be.

The others, however, were in hardly so confident a frame of mind; and they were even nervously particular about their neckties, and the way their hair looked.

Dick Lee had less trouble about the latter than either of his friends did; for his was cut short, and it curled too closely to his head to admit of any other arrangement. Still, even after Mrs. Myers and Almira had left the house, in blissful ignorance that their boarders were to follow them, and after

Dick had done all that human skill could do for his shoes, he wandered off to his own room, with an air of deep dejection. He was hardly missed for some minutes, but at the end of these Dab Kinzer poked his head into the hall.

“Dick! Dick Lee, are you getting ready?”

No answer came; and Dabney strode down the entry, and opened the door of Dick’s garret.

“Ready, Dick? What are you doing here in the dark?”

“I isn’t a-goin’.”

Dab was back in his own room instantly, and caught up a candle.

“What’s the matter, Dab?” asked Frank Harley.

“Going to light up Dick.”

They both followed him as he darted away; and all three of Dick’s friends, light and all, came bolting in upon him. There he sat, in his shirt-sleeves, on the edge of his bed, a very picture of melancholy.

“It ain’t ob no use, boys. Dey don’t none ob ‘em want to see me, an’ I isn’t goin’.”

“Don’t they, then? Deacon Robinson, I’ll tell him and Bob you were afraid to come.”

“Will all de Robinsons be dar?”

“And Mrs. Sunderland. I’ll tell her you’ve gone to Liberia. She’ll be sure to ask after you.”

“I s’peck she will.”

“And Deacon Short. I’ll tell him you were afraid

he'd ask you about that crow. There'll be more people there that want to see you than that want to see me. Dick, you're a coward."

"Cap'n Dab, does you say dat?"

"Course I do. Where's your necktie?"

"I am not intending to wear that old red thing. I have bought me a new one."

"Good for you. Now, that's a neat thing. Blue! Ford, did you ever see a prettier necktie than that? Put it on, Dick. I want to see how it looks, even if you back out."

"There is no backing out in me, Dab Kinzer. I's a-goin' to de party, I is."

Dick's tongue would do very well, so long as he was carefully watching it; but it was only too apt to get away from him if he forgot for a moment. That was one ground of his trouble about exposing himself to the dangers of mixed company. Now, however, that he brought to mind so many friendly faces, instead of new and strange ones, and Dab crowned them all with Dr. Brandegee's, he rallied fast, and the remainder of his toilet was quickly made.

"Now, boys," said Ford, "we must do this thing right up to the handle."

Exactly what that meant, he took no trouble to explain; and in a few minutes more they were marching into Elder Fallow's, just behind a party of his most approved parishioners.

The parsonage was a large, roomy sort of house; and it had all been prepared especially for this occasion, so that, as Ford remarked, "the party could be held pretty much all over it."

The sitting-room, dining-room, and even the kitchen, were given up to the uses of an extraordinary number of well-furnished tables, and of the apparently hungry people who surrounded them; while the parlor was employed by the pastor and his wife as a "reception-room," that is, as a place where they might receive their liberal guests, and quite a quantity of contributions, of the kinds which did not require to be sent to the barn or the store-room.

This classification was by no means rigid; for a cheese stood in one corner, and upon that a tub of butter, and upon that a bushel-basket of particularly fine apples, just arrived.

Everybody knew that all cash contributions would be attended to by Deacon Short.

There had been no other arrival to that moment, nor were there afterwards any, to whom a warmer greeting was given than the one received by the quartet, much to the astonishment of Mrs. Myers, who witnessed it through the doorway of the adjoining room. She could even hear Mr. Fallow say,—

"My dear young friends"—in spite of all the noise Almira was making upon Mrs. Fallow's piano, just beyond her.

A thought came into her mind, —

“Pigeons! That’s it! I saw any quantity of them,—roasted, stuffed, broiled. The young scapegraces! To do such a thing, and not tell me!”

She could not help being a little proud of them, nevertheless; for they were her own boarders, and they were plainly making something of a sensation.

Not but what there were other boys there, of their own age and under; but they were all recognized sons of the “congregation,” and not strangers and outsiders from the academy. More than one good lady repeated to herself, and even to her next friend, the expression of her “wonder how those students got in.”

They were in now, and they were well satisfied with their welcome; but the question as to what they should do next was a serious one. They did not feel exactly like breaking ranks just yet; and they must go somewhere, for there were fresh arrivals every minute.

Dabney caught a glimpse of Mrs. Myers in the other room; and the others followed him like so many sheep, as he led the way towards her.

“Mrs. Sunderland,” exclaimed Mrs. Myers in a hoarse whisper, “here is your young colored friend.”

“Here? To-night? Why, you don’t tell me so!”

Mrs. Myers arose bravely to the emergency thrust

upon her. The quartet had hardly reached her end of the piano before she was introducing them right and left, and the crowd thickened fast in that corner of the room in spite of Almira's music. Mrs. Sunderland almost took Dick Lee under her wing. Frank Harley's handsome face, and quiet, reserved manners, did all that was needed for him; but somehow Ford Foster found himself a little out of his element. The people around him were all strangers, and he knew nothing whatever about them. He also perceived that they neither knew nor cared a very great deal about him, and the effect of that was depressing. As for Dab Kinzer, he was struggling severely with a new sensation. He had been brought up among girls, as is every boy who has four sisters older than himself; and he had never been afraid of a young lady in his life until now. Oh, how he did wish there had been more boys—twice as many—in the crowd around him, or else not half so many girls! Some of them were very pretty too; and every one of them said something to the girl next her which made them both giggle.

“Can there be any thing wrong with my hair? or with my necktie? Is there any thing on my face?”

There was nothing unusual except a great deal of color, and more coming; and Dab's clothing was entirely correct.

Still, it did seem as if the piece of music Miss

Almira Myers was playing would last forever, and he could not hope to hear what the young ladies were saying until the piano gave him a chance.

Hardly had the music ceased, when at last it did, before the whole quartet began to wish it had kept right on. Almira rose from the piano, and poured a volley of smiles upon her mother's boarders; but she had no chance given her to speak to them. The old lady who lived next door got ahead of her with,—

“Now, Mrs. Myers, you must make them play and sing. All those things I heard 'em do the day you was away to sewing-society. I don't know which of 'em plays, but I guess they all do.”

All the girls took it up in a twinkling, and it was in vain for the quartet to protest that it didn't know a note.

“Boys,” said Ford, “we're in for it!”

“Ah, now!” pleaded a tall young woman with curls, “can you not give us ‘Come where my Love lies dreaming’?”

“Of course we can,” said Ford. “Frank, it's that Hindoo song of yours, with the U-pi-dee chorus. I'll play the accompaniment.”

Frank's voice was a very good one, and the effort made by the donation-party to know what it was he was singing brought on a general fit of silence. Even the girls ceased talking.

“Ford,” whispered Dabney, “we're safe here.

Let's keep right on. We'll sing all we know. Dick, it's your turn: don't you back out."

Dick was in something of a tremble; but he obeyed orders, and Mrs. Sunderland was proud of him. As she explained to a lady friend, —

"If he were grown up, you know, it would be very different; but at his age, and he's the only one."

"But if he were a girl, now?"

"That would be very different, of course. We should have to draw the line. Besides, this is only a donation-party."

She hardly knew how well she was defining the general feeling with reference to the unexpected presence of Mr. Richard Lee.

The quartet did splendidly.

Mrs. Myers felt that the least she could do, when their last song had been begged for and sung, and the crowd was tired of it, and grew noisy again, would be to show them the way to the supper-tables. It was surprising, too, how very many young ladies found themselves hungry at about the same time, and how much hospitality they felt like showing.

"Dab," said Ford, "Frank is the favorite, and you're half a head taller than he is."

"I can't sing in Hindu."

"Look at Dick! He did his singing first-rate, and he can grin you and me out of sight."

The Robinson family had now come to the front,

and Dab thought that he had never been gladder to see any fellow than he was to see Bob. That young man, however, while cordial to all of them, seemed to have taken a special work upon himself with reference to Ford Foster, and the instruction he needed in the ways of up-country society. Ford responded with all his might, half conscious, it may be, of the envy of his friends, when they saw how fully his confidence in his own powers was now restored.

"Dab," he managed to say privately, an hour or so later, "don't you forget, now. You must see somebody home. Bob says so."

Dab found himself getting chilly, as the meaning of that remark slowly dawned upon him; but it was only a few minutes later that he heard Bob whisper,—

"Have you made your pick, Ford?"

"Of course I have."

"Did she say 'yes'?"

"Of course she did. It's that Miss What's-her-name, over yonder."

"Salina McGosh?" and then Dab noticed that Bob was chuckling. He could not see why; for the young lady indicated was only a little taller than Ford, and had the merriest, fun-lovingest face of any girl in the room.

Dab had not heard Ford's polite offer to accom-

pany Salina, when it was made, nor her equally polite,—

“Certainly, Mr. Foster. With pleasure.”

Neither did he happen to be as near as Bob Robinson was, when the evident breaking-up of the party warned Ford that the time for his services was nearing him. Else he might have seen the twinkle in Salina’s eyes, when she said,—

“Are you fond of walking, Mr. Foster?”

“Very, indeed.”

“I’m glad of it. The ride to our house will be delightful, such a night as this.”

“The ride, Miss McGosh?”

“But I fear you will be tired when you get home.”

It was too bad of Bob to chuckle in the way he did, but he did not know Ford Foster. Red as that young gentleman’s face was growing, he cleared his throat, and replied manfully,—

“Precisely, Miss McGosh; but I understood you and I were to walk out there, and then you were to send me home in the wagon.”

Salina had met her match for once; and Ford escaped from what Bob called “a good sell,” as well as could have been expected.

The one person in Elder Fallow’s rooms, that evening, who had watched the doings of the quartet with even deeper interest than had Mrs. Myers, or Deacon Robinson, had been Dr. Brandegee himself;

but he had not told them so in any way. He had even responded with some care to the enthusiastic comments made upon them by little Mrs. Fallow, although he ate his share of the pigeons. He was too wise a teacher to have, or seem to have, any favorites among his pupils.

Ford's discomfiture was as yet unknown to Frank and Dick; and he was at Dab's side in a moment afterwards.

"Dab, I guess I won't see anybody home. The girls live too far away to suit me; but I'll let you see me home, if you'll ask me in time. It's time now."

Dab thought it was; and it was easy to call up the other two. They even slipped away without arousing the suspicions of Mrs. Myers and Almira; but, for some reason, they were all inclined to be silent on their way home.

The secret of Dick Lee's glumness, in particular, came out before they had been up-stairs half a minute,—just long enough to light a candle.

"I have made up my mind about one thing," he said slowly, and in a tone of fixed determination.

"What's that, Dick?" said Dab.

"I've been to just the last place of that kind I'm going to, long as I live."

"Why, Dick," exclaimed Ford in astonishment, "you had as good a time as any of us!"

"They paid you all sorts of attention," added Frank.

"So dey did; but I's been to de show, 'fore dis. Seen de fat man, an' de libin' skeleton, an' de wax-works. I isn't goin' for to be no kin' ob curiosity, I isn't, suah!"

Dick was on his feet in the middle of the floor when he said that; and it suddenly occurred to his friends that they had never before known him to appear quite so well.

"Dick," said Dab thoughtfully, "I ain't sure but what you're right."

"I *is* right. I don't want to go into no crowd whar dey jest let me stay. Dey's all good sort ob folks, but dey's w'ite. I isn't."

That was not all of it. Dick Lee's manhood had been growing within him pretty rapidly for more weeks than he knew of, and it had reached the rebellion point at last. That donation-party had done as much for his education as his whole fall term at Grantley would do.

Nevertheless, there was not quite so much discussion of the events of the evening as there otherwise might have been; and Dabney forgot to ask Ford just how far beyond Deacon Robinson's the McGosh family lived.

When Mrs. Myers and Almira reached the house, indeed, they were astonished to find that all their boarders except Dick Lee had already gone to bed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WINTER HOLIDAYS.

DABNEY KINZER waited for his next letter from home with feverish interest, but it seemed a long time in coming. It was not that Mrs. Kinzer had hesitated a moment about accepting the Foster invitation.

"It will be a good thing for Dabney," she said to Ham Morris at the tea-table. "He'd better make his visit on his way home."

The girls all said the same thing; and what neither one of them added aloud was any expression of her regret that Mrs. Foster had confined her politeness to Dabney. Mrs. Kinzer thought about it too, but she saw the truth at once.

"If there had been only one of them," she said to herself. "Of course they could not ask all three to a boarding-house. It isn't as if they were living by themselves."

The letter to Dab, however, was a matter which

called for mature deliberation ; and, when at last it came, it contained a check for money, besides his mother's consent and some very good advice.

Among other things, she said, —

“ You will not be extravagant, of course. The Fosters are sensible people, but they are stylish. I want you to look well, that's all. I will trust you not to buy any thing you do not need. As to any thing else, you must be careful always to pay your share, and not let Ford pay for you unless you are sure it is all right.”

She had more to say in other letters, after that ; but she made it plain to Dabney, from the start, that his mother expected him to sustain the credit of his bringing up while he was with his city friends.

It was only a week or two later that Dab received also a letter from Ham Morris, and that, too, contained an “ enclosure.” A part of Ham's epistle informed his young brother-in-law that, —

“ I've never had better crops, or sold to better advantage. Mother beats me all hollow in planning and bargaining, and Miranda takes after her. I've put in this here postal-order for you, on account of your city visit. Don't you let them get the notion that we 'long-shore folks can't pay our own way. I've an idea that the Fosters hold their heads kind of high. That's me too. Your mother says she's sent you all you need for clothes and things ; but a

little more won't hurt you, only don't make a fool of yourself."

"I won't," said Dabney, when he read Ham's letter, and looked at the money-order; but he wondered what could be coming to him that would call for the use of so many dollars.

Days before that, he had been in consultation with Ford, and then with the crack tailor of Grantley, as to the shape, color, and proportions of a new suit of clothes.

"We ought both to have swallow-tail coats," was a sadly-uttered remark by Ford; "but my father wouldn't listen to it. I know fellows, no older'n I am, that have worn out their second claw-hammer. You'd better get a frock. Black, my boy: it's the only thing."

Thinking of wearing-apparel for her own boy, naturally suggested to Mrs. Kinzer that cold weather was coming, and that Dick Lee might need something warm. She even spoke to Glorianna about it gingerly; but Mrs. Lee almost "fired up."

"You's been a good friend ob mine, Miss Kinzer; but I guess I kin put clo'es on de back ob my own boy. I's jes' sent 'im 'nuff money to buy wot he wants. I's obliged to ye, all de same."

The fact was, that Bill Lee had never in his life done so much fishing, during the same number of months, as he had that fall, and found so few days

when he felt like saying, “reckon de wedder won’t suit ;” while Glorianna had developed a sort of hunger for more washing to do, and for charging a shilling more than usual to everybody she worked for. As a consequence, Dick Lee also had a letter to open, and a postal money-order to unfold from the close embrace of the queer, half “printed,” crabbed scrawl within. It looked, for all the world, as if the sender of that money were making a long-distance effort to hug the receiver of it.

Small wonder that Dick’s eyes should glisten so brightly, or then that he should laugh a little, with a laugh that gurgled lower and lower, until—for he was alone in his garret when he read his letter—his bright black face was bowed upon his arms, over the head-board of his bedstead, and he sobbed as only homesick and heart-sore young fellows know how to sob.

“ She’s de bes’ mudder ebber was in all dis worl’ ! ”

He knew very well how much hard work it must have taken, and what self-denial, to pile up twenty-five dollars in the hands of Glorianna Lee.

When she received Dick’s desperate effort to tell her on paper all he felt about it, there was no small effort required on her part to read it to old Bill. She had to stop, every line or two, and “study.”

“ Glorianny, is you chokin’? ”

“ Sho ! de boy ! Wot’s twenty-five dollars, I’d like to know, for him to make sech a fuss about ? ”

"Read de res' ob it."

"Jes' you hush up till I git de nex' word. My eyes isn't wot dey once was."

There was no better pair within five miles; but she had to wipe them a little, of course, to keep them bright while she read the rest of Dick's letter.

"Sho! de boy! Bill Lee, whar you goin' dis time o' night?"

"Whar's I goin'? Guess it's a good night foh eels."

"Eels? I knows jes' how you feels about it; but you sha'n't stir out ob de house. You's got to stay home an' take keer ob yer wife. I git powerful lonely w'en I'me been readin' from Dick."

Bill would have gone for all the eels in the bay if she had said so; but he knew, as well as she did, that there was no money to be earned that night, and he was well content to stay and keep company with her and that wonderful letter.

As for Dabney Kinzer, the moment his mother's consent arrived, he turned upon Ford Foster concerning his reply to Annie.

"Have you written to her yet?"

"Of course not. The poor girl's just been waiting."

"Won't you do it right away, then? Tell her I couldn't answer any sooner."

Ford was willing, all over; and again it almost

seemed as if he were a mere pen and paper holder for the correspondence between his sister and Dab Kinzer. He appeared to appreciate his position too; for he added a good deal upon his own account, in a postscript.

The month of December is a very slow one, and it absolutely played snail for the Grantley Academy boys that year. Especially after Dr. Brandegee's public announcement, two weeks ahead of time, that all pupils from a distance would be allowed two days to go home in, to make sure of getting there by or before Christmas. If he had not intended thereby to include boys whose parents lived within six hours' ride by railway, not one of them came to him for a further explanation. They all went home on the first of those two days.

Ford Foster's wardrobe did not require to be increased in Grantley; but when Dabney's new apparel came to the house, and he saw how well it fitted, he frankly declared,—

“I don't believe I shall do any better than that. A frock looks better on you than a cut-away does. Why, Dabney, if you had on a plug-hat you could pass for eighteen; in the dark, for twenty.”

“I shall be sixteen three days before New Year's,” replied Dab, with another look in the glass. “These things do make me look older. But about a hat.”

“Oh! we won't buy one here. We get out of this

on a Monday, for Christmas gets to town on Wednesday this year. Our train'll reach the city in the morning, and we can both of us mount new hats before we go to the house."

"Regular winter styles?"

"Of course. Nippiest kind. You wouldn't have us two fellows walk up Fifth Avenue in the tiles we bought last summer?"

If Dabney failed to see the deep importance of the hat question, he did not say so; and when, on the Tuesday morning before Christmas, he and Ford and Dick were jolted wide awake in the Grand Central Dépôt, almost his first ideas related to the "winter styles."

"Time enough," said Ford. "We must have some breakfast first. Come along, Dick."

"Not dis time," said Dick a trifle hastily. "Dar don't any t'ing stop me till I's in a Long Island railway-car, dar don't."

"Get some breakfast over there, then, before the train starts."

"Dick," said Dab, "after you've seen your folks, just you run over to our house. They'll be right down glad to see you."

"Guess I will. Hope you'll bof' hab a good time. Good-by."

He was out of the car, and away, a good minute and a half before either of his friends; and Glorianna

and Bill would have been entirely satisfied if they had known how loyally their boy's heart was beating for them that crisp December morning. No frost in the Lee family anywhere, whatever there might be in the glittering winter day.

"Dab," remarked Ford a little later, as they sat in front of a very hot breakfast at one of the little tables of a restaurant, "Frank must have reached his place last night. Ain't I glad he got away from the Hart business!"

"He'll have a good time too. Everybody's good to him on his father's account, and his mother's; and he's the kind of fellow it's easy to like."

"He just is all that."

The quartet's good opinion of its membership was a settled thing; but those two rose a little in their own estimation after their visit to the fashionable "hat-store" to which Ford shortly led the way.

He had, indeed, vetoed a number of nicely built headgears, because they "looked too young, you know," and had gazed with yearning fondness into a glass case that exhibited the high-topped silks which he described, indifferently, as "plugs" and "stove-pipes."

"They're not for us this time, Dabney, my boy."

It was sad, but still they were a something to look forward to, and meantime the hats they actually bought had nothing specially boyish in their pattern;

and they both indulged in the great happiness of new kid gloves.

“Dark brown is the correct thing in kids,” remarked Ford, as they walked away; but Dabney was wondering, just then, if his hands would ever learn to feel comfortable in those things, and what his mother and the girls and Ham Morris would say if they saw him wearing them. He could hardly solve that problem; but, before he reached his destination, he discovered that kids were about the coldest hand-covers he ever wore in winter. All the cost of dressing “correctly” is not paid out in money, and it was well for Dabney to learn as much.

He felt that he was learning a good deal that morning; and he was fairly staggered when Ford halted him in front of an imposing pile of brick and stone, with the quiet observation, —

“This is our place. Just such a concern as I was hoping they had picked out. Annie says it’s all she could ask for.”

Dab thought there was more of it than any reasonable being ought to ask for; but he pulled his gloves a little farther on, and followed Ford. Then, as they were walking up-stairs, after a rotund colored man had opened the front door for them, he again imitated his friend, and half-nervously pulled his gloves off.

His immediate trials seemed to vanish the moment

they entered the private parlor belonging to the Fosters,—in that great honeycomb of parlors and bedrooms,—for the welcome he received had in it not only all the good-will that of right belonged to him, but something also of the unexpended fervor which Mr. Foster and Mrs. Foster and Annie were unable to lavish all at once upon Ford. Dab was made to feel so completely at home, that it made him think of home wonderfully; and he inwardly determined that not all the splendors of New York should detain him a needless hour from what he knew would be at least as vigorous and a more numerous assortment of hugs and kisses as that which had upset Ford's own dignity.

Meantime, he resolved to meet the circumstances in which he found himself, in a way to merit any amount of home approbation.

He found no difficulty in finding his footing, so to speak, with Mr. and Mrs. Foster; but it was not so easy with Annie. She had not grown an inch, or any part of one; but for all that she seemed taller. Yes, and handsomer and statelier; and Dab had to think of a great many things which had happened in her company the previous summer, before he could help her much in her efforts to make him feel at ease.

“There's one thing I begin to understand,” he said to himself at last. “There's an awful differ-

ence between the rig she's wearing now, and the kind of light summer goods she wore on the sea-shore."

That was something truly. In fact, it was a great deal, and her surroundings were a great deal more; and, besides all that, Dab had no idea of the impression he himself was making, or how clearly both the ladies perceived that he was drawing near the line where he would leave his "boyhood" behind him. He would be earlier about it than Ford would be, they knew, as they glanced at that young gentleman, and listened to the all but ceaseless stream of his decidedly sparkling "conversation."

The boys had arrived at a somewhat early hour, after all, and there was time to be given them; but it was not long before Mr. Foster suddenly sprang to his feet, exclaiming, —

"My dear, I must be off. That Larrabee case will surely come on to-day. The courts'll close early. I must win it if I can, but the odds are against me."

"Who is to argue it on the other side?"

"Don't know. Hope it'll be Laswell. He never knows what to do with evidence: takes it for granted the jury will do that. Ford, you must see that Dabney enjoys himself. Show him every thing."

That was precisely what Ford had already agreed upon with Dabney; but he was a little surprised, after his father hurried out, to hear Dab say, —

“That’s just one thing I’ve never seen, and I’d like to see it.”

“What’s that?”

“Why, a court-room. Can’t we manage to hear your father argue that case?”

“Easiest thing in the world. We can see lots of other matters on the way.—Mother, can you and Annie do without me while we make a trip down town?”

They both said they could, but that there was no hurry about it ; and Dabney spent nearly two hours more in completing his idea of what a great New-York “apartment-hotel” really was. Perhaps his idea was not any too clear after he had completed it.

Then, for the first time in his life, he had a genuine “saunter,” down the best streets of the great city. Ford led the way to the Fifth Avenue first, but did not follow it far ; for, as he remarked, —

“Broadway is your only promenade at this time of day. We require canes, but we’ll come to a stick-stand before we’ve gone a great ways.”

So they did ; and it made Dab’s fingers colder yet to carry that bit of yellow varnished wood, but it had to be done.

Ford was a good showman, both of buildings and people ; so that it did not seem to Dabney that he had walked an excessive distance, when he was led out into the City Hall Square. He had seen that

before, and knew it ; but Ford hurried him across to the court-house, saying, —

“ You can’t always tell just when a case’ll come up. I’ve watched ‘em. Father says he never can guess what a jury’ll do with one.”

As it came to pass, they had hit the proper time wonderfully ; for the witnesses in that case were just beginning to tell what they knew about it, when the two friends entered the court-room. They seemed to know a good deal ; but there were not many of them, and the lawyers on both sides were aware that it was the day before Christmas, and that their work must be hurried a little. Hurry it they did ; but Dabney was astonished to find how deeply interested he quickly became in all that those men were telling, under solemn oaths to tell the truth. Strange, he thought, that no two of them should remember the same thing in the same way.

It was a wonderful experience to Dabney, — the judge on the bench ; the swarm of busy lawyers ; the jury in their seats ; the witnesses, one after another ; the dignity, and the silence. It was a “ Court of Justice ;” and that is really one of the most wonderful things in the world, but it is not always a boy of barely sixteen years can feel the interest of it.

By and by the lawyer on the other side spoke, and he seemed to Dabney to speak very well.

"That's the man father was hoping for," whispered Ford.

"He'll get that case."

"Wait till you hear father."

Dabney waited, and he listened with both his ears; and he had never been more surprised in all his life, for Mr. Foster certainly "knew what to do with evidence," whatever might be true of his opponent, Mr. Laswell.

Then the judge had something to say; and then the jury rose, and were solemnly led out of the court-room.

"There goes father," said Ford. "He won't wait for the verdict."

"Will they be long in making it?"

"Nobody could tell, at any other time; but all those twelve men want to get home. They won't quarrel much about it to-day."

"Of course," thought Dabney, "they will see justice done;" and then he marched off with Ford to a nice luncheon, but with a swarm of new thoughts in his head. After that there were other sights to see, and they were all done as only boys on a vacation can do that sort of thing.

"We must be home in good season," said Ford. "Our whole crowd's going to the opera to-night, to see 'Faust.' Did you ever see an opera?"

"Never."

"Then, you won't know what to do with it. I don't, and I've been there lots of times. Still, it's a thing you mustn't miss."

Dab's ideas of what an opera might be were somewhat vague, but he did not say much about it. In fact, it was beginning to be a silent sort of day, even for Dabney; and he never talked a great deal. The only time when he thought, for a moment, that he had let his tongue get away from him, was when, just before they all went down to dinner, Mr. Foster replied to his wife, —

"The Larrabee case? Oh! we won it. The jury were out only half an hour.—Dabney, what did you think of it? Did you hear the evidence and the arguments?"

"Yes, sir; all of them."

"What do you think about the verdict in my favor?"

That was where Dab blundered; for he spoke his thought right out, because he was thinking so hard.

"Well, sir, it seems to me that if I'd had a chance to talk to them, I'd have persuaded them to decide the other way."

Mr. Foster was silent for a moment, and his lips pursed up a little; but then he said, it seemed a little suddenly, —

"Do you mean to go to college, Dabney, after you get through at Grantley? Ford's going."

"I really do not know," said Dab very slowly.
"Mother has never said a word to me about it."

"H'm. No. She hasn't. Well, I should say it was time she began to think of it."

He said no more just then ; but, before the holiday vacation was over, Mrs. Kinzer received from Mrs. Foster a letter of a confidential character, which neither her son nor her daughter knew anything about, and it told her Mr. Foster's private opinion of what could be done with a young man like Dabney, after he had been through the right kind of a college. Dab's blunder, therefore, may not have been so very bad a one, after all.

CHAPTER VIII.

DABNEY LOOKS INTO ANOTHER WORLD.

FRANK HARLEY's invitation for the winter holidays, the one he had accepted, led him farther northward, to a very pleasant New-England city, on the shore of the stormy Atlantic.

He left behind him in Grantley something more than a foot deep of snow, with a few respectable drifts. He had seen snow at a distance, among the mountain-ranges, even before he left India. Never in his life until then, however, had he received any fair idea of what a winter could be, so short a time after it really began to try to be one. It seemed to him, when he wrapped himself up, and walked out of the sleeping-car, that Tuesday morning, so far from any other member of the quartet, that he had ridden, over night, into a kind of new world. There had been sleighing and sleighs in Grantley, to a limited extent, and some small "riding down hill;" but here was a population utterly given up to bells and

runners. It was a comfort, indeed, in the midst of so much that was new and strange, to find one of the nicest sleighs he had ever dreamed of,—furnished with no end of blankets and skins, and drawn by horses who could not move without a jingle,—all ready to take him to the merriest kind of a snow-crowned, winter-gladdened, Christmas-keeping New-England homestead. He felt, before he had finished his breakfast, almost like pitying the boys who had not come North. Before the day was over, he was half convinced that snow was an institution no free country would consent to do without, and had filled his young brain with the wildest visions of coasting, skating, sleighing-parties, and even the pleasures of a snowball match.

His friends had taken counsel concerning him beforehand, and had hospitably decided that he was thousands of miles away from home, must be at least so many thousands of miles lonely, and that it was their duty to see to it that he should not once long for India and hot weather, while he should be under their roof.

That sort of resolution is very likely to bring about its own fulfilment.

As for Dick Lee, he had not ridden into snow-drifts at all; for very little snow had fallen, as yet, on the south shore of Long Island. He had time enough to get some breakfast, that morning, as Ford

Foster said he would, before any train was ready to carry him farther; but, for once in his life, it seemed as if all his appetite had departed from him.

"I'm jes' suah she'll wait breakfas' for me till I get dar, if it's de middle ob de afternoon."

It was only the middle of the forenoon when his half-empty car was pulled up at the platform of the village station; and there was old Bill Lee, waiting as patiently for his boy as ever he had waited for a bite out on the bay. He laughed, too, and he shook Dick's hand till his arm ached, and his eyes were brighter than Dick's own; but the old fisherman hardly seemed to know what to say. What he did was to actually walk fast enough to keep up with Dick, all the way to the house; and that meant a faster rate, by a good deal, than he was accustomed to.

Sure enough, breakfast was waiting, with Gloriana standing a sort of guard over it to keep it hot; and then all three of them were as badly off as old Bill had been at first, for not one of them knew what to say. Dick was vaguely conscious of a torrent of exclamations and hugs and kisses, and of any imaginable amount of happy mother, and of great rejoicing on his own part; and then he kind of came to himself while he was being held at arm's-length, and looked at.

“Sho! De boy! Isn’t I glad to git ye back agin! Don’t know’s I’ll ebber let ye go ‘way from yer old mother any moah.”

It was worth while to go, though, if only to know how much he would be missed; and then, too, on his return, to find that he had for ever and ever slipped and climbed and grown up and out of a little black clam-digger, into a person of whom all sorts of things were expected. It was queer how rapidly the news of his return spread among his mother’s more intimate neighbors, and how soon her front room was half full of sympathizing matrons and maidens. Among these, moreover, after a little, there came sidling in more than one of Dick’s own former associates,—boys of his own age and under, upon whom no academy lightning had happened to strike, and who were dimly conscious that the future contained no golden dreams for them,—nothing but a perpetual succession of good, bad, and indifferent seasons for clams, oysters, lobsters and the other “free crops” of the beaches and the bay.

Dick was remarkably glad to see them all, but he could not help feeling that they were, in a manner, a little afraid of him; and before a great while he said,—

“Now, mother, I promised Dab I’d go and see his folks. He won’t be home for nearly a week yet.”

"Does his mother know it? Is he goin' to be dat mean wid her? I'd nebber ha' t'ought dat ob him. It jes' spiles some boys to sen' 'em to de 'cad'my."

Dick explained the matter as well as he could, but Glorianna could hardly see how there was any right side to such a piece of business.

"Keepin' his own mother a-waitin' for 'im, wile he goes a-trapasin' 'roun' de city! Yes, Dick, you'd oughter go. I's sorry for Miss Kinzer. She's been a good friend ob your'n."

So he took himself away from the admiring circle in the cottage, and hurried through the village towards the road to Ham Morris's, feeling, all the way, that he had taken upon himself a task of more than common difficulty. He had no idea that anybody would add to it; but, just as he was passing the gate of the old Kinzer homestead, it swung half open, and a clear girlish voice hailed him with,—

"How do you do, Dick? Did Dab Kinzer come home with you?"

"I's pretty well, thank you. Isn't you Miss Jenny Walters?"

"You know me well enough. Where's Dabney?"

"I have heard him speak of you frequently," replied Dick, recovering complete control of his tongue. "Mr. Kinzer is visiting in the city with his friends the Fosters. He will be home in a few days."

"Oh! Seems to me I heard something about that, but I had forgotten it. Excuse me for stopping you. Did you find your mother well?"

"Jes' de bes' kind," said Dick, with a quick perception that there was nothing of any importance left for him to say to Jenny Walters.

"Glad to see you looking so well too. Good-morning, Dick."

"Good-morning. I's jes' a-goin' ober to his house."

Go he did, for Jenny wheeled at once towards her own door; and in a minute and a half more Dick was the centre of a party from whom he was not likely to escape without telling pretty much all he knew,—that is, of the very kind he was most willing to tell,—and the manner of his reception had set him entirely at his ease. Of course the conversation turned mainly upon things and doings at Grantley, with Dab Kinzer as a kind of pivot for it all to revolve around; and at last Mrs. Kinzer herself inquired,—

"Richard, do you think Dabney has grown any?"

Dick's face put on a thoughtful expression, and he stared for a moment point-blank into the fire in the big grate before him.

"Has Dab growed? I should rudder say he had. Yes, ma'am: if any young gentleman I know of ever did grow, he's been growing. I can't just say how much."

Ham Morris winked and nodded at Miranda just

then, very much as if he were saying, "I told you so;" but Mrs. Kinzer's face grew even more thoughtful than Dick's, for she was inwardly remarking,—

"How I wish he were here *now!*"

It had cost her every bit as much as even Glorianna had imagined, to permit her one boy to remain longer away from her.

Ham and the girls had the remainder of Dick's cross-examination all to themselves, and they made it a thorough one; but at last he was set at liberty, and sent back to be again hugged and looked at by his mother.

As for Dabney, he had small time to think of home. He was making, almost without intending it, a deep and half-anxious study of city ways and "society manners," and was compelled to keep all his wits about him. He would have been proud enough if he had heard Mrs. Foster say to her husband, in their own room,—

"How perfectly well he behaves!" and then her husband's answer,—

"Why, my dear, you know who had the training of him. He's a credit to his mother."

"I'm glad Ford has such a companion, anyway. I feel so safe about him."

That was a good deal more than Dabney could say for himself. He did not feel safe at all, especially

about the opera. He had but a vague notion of what sort of a concern the "Academy of Music" might be; and yet he felt a good deal of hesitation about asking ignorant and hap-hazard questions, even of Ford.

Mr. Foster had secured reserved seats, several days before, like the careful man he was, and there was therefore no occasion for haste; but Annie insisted on an early going, for she said, —

"I want Dabney to see and hear every bit of it."

That was kind of Annie, but neither she nor her mother had the faintest idea of the next sensation they were preparing for their young friend from the country. It came upon him with a great and sudden surprise, when the two ladies, all prepared for the opera, came sweeping into their parlor, where the boys and Mr. Foster were waiting for them. Dabney had frequently seen his mother and sisters dressed for company, even all of them at once; but the kind of toilet required for a social evening among the "'long-shore" people was not very elaborate, and then, too, it must be said that not even Miranda, with all her rosy health, could compare in beauty or grace with Ford Foster's elegant sister.

Dabney had always regarded her as something a good deal more than pretty, and her mother as about the nicest lady he had ever heard of; but there was a kind of dazzled feeling in his eyes just now. He

could not have said a word, and even walked away a little, towards the other side of the room.

An alarmed, penitent thought, too, came vaguely into his mind: "Have I called her Annie, since I've been here? I hope not. What does Ford mean?"

That young gentleman was calmly eying his sister from head to foot, but with an expression of strong approval on his face.

"You will do, Annie," he remarked. "You look almost as well as mother does. It pleases me to have you take some pains with your apparel when you are to go out with me."

"Dabney," said Annie, just then, "will you carry down my muff for me? You can hand it to me after we get into the carriage."

How could she have guessed that he needed something to re-assure him? He was a brave fellow, though; for he walked right up towards her, near enough to take the muff in his hand without having to lean forward, and he even took her magnificent bouquet as well, without any appearance of awkwardness. He would not have dropped either one of those treasures for a farm as big as Ham Morris's. He could not help feeling anxious about it, nevertheless, and was vastly relieved when he saw them once more in Annie Foster's keeping, and her and her mother safely stowed away on the back seat of the roomy barouche Mr. Foster had hired for the occa-

sion. It had need to be roomy, and Dabney wondered what would become of him if he should find out afterwards that he had clumsily trodden on the marvellous skirts of either of those beautiful robes. Little he knew how tremendous a "first lesson" he was getting. If he should take it rightly it would do him good, and he had been carefully trained with a view to being able to get the good out of whatever experiences might come to him.

When the barouche drove into the long line of carriages at the entrance of the Academy of Music, and slowly crept up to its turn for discharging its passengers, Dabney was beginning to understand the matter somewhat better; but he almost held his breath while they were going in. He held it altogether when he found himself marching towards the seats belonging to their party, only a little behind Annie Foster, with her lorgnette in his hand. He seemed to have suddenly passed through a gate into a new world of light and sound; a world of brilliant dress, bright faces, splendid illumination, with a great and energetic orchestra pouring it all brimful of music.

He had dreamed of some such thing. He had read the "Arabian Nights." He knew a great deal could be done with money and skill. But the Academy of Music on that Christmas Eve surpassed all the visions or expectations of the Long Island

country boy. He was quite contented to sit still and listen to Ford Foster's remarks, while Annie and her mother bowed and smiled at their acquaintances ; and he desperately determined not to stare around, although it was the one thing he most desired to do.

"Dab," said Ford, nodding at the orchestra, "do you see that little Dutchman with the big horn? He fell into it once, and they had to send for a boat-hook to fish him out."

Evidently there was nothing in the scene around him which in the least degree interfered with the comfortable self-assurance of young Mr. Foster. He had seen it all before; and, while he highly approved of it, he was in no wise disturbed by any of its characteristics.

The performance was all that could have been asked for, and it quickly came to Dabney's mind that he himself did not know and could not guess whether it was good or not. Before that night he had found himself wondering where so many rich people came from, rich enough to live in so many fine houses as there were in the great city, and how they all came to be so rich; and now he understood, as he looked around him, that these were the kind of people who lived in those miles and miles of elegant residences, and that, somehow, their world was different from the world lived in by people who had less money, and

who knew nothing about dress and style and music. He was learning a great deal, that evening ; and it was too soon for him to discover how much of that splendor was like the gas-light it shone in, — sure to vanish as soon as the supply of gas should be shut off. He would learn all that, and a good deal more, some other day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEGINNING OF CHANGES.

IT was somewhat late on Thursday evening of that holiday week when Dabney Kinzer lugged his heavy travelling-bag out upon the platform at his "home station." There had been a pretty heavy fall of snow; and every thing wore a white, changed look in the clear moonlight that was shining.

"Is dat you, Dab?"

"Hallo, Dick! have you seen any of our folks?"

"Mr. Morris was down here an hour ago. Dey tole him de train'd be behind time, an' he went home. Tole me to stay an' show you de way to de house if you'd forgot it."

"That's just like Ham. Is everybody all right?"

"Jes' as right as dey can be. The population is in good health, but I guess your mother wants to see you. Give me that bag."

"Guess not. Take one side of it."

Dick had a good deal to tell; and Dab was quite

willing to let him tell it without any interruption except a few questions, all the way to the gate. Dick cut himself very short, however, when they got there.

“I’s goin’, Dab. Dey’s made a jump from de windows for de doah. See you to-morrow.”

He was off like a good fellow, and in another moment Ham Morris was carrying the bag in. Dab’s coming had been watched for, and it would have done any one good to have seen Mrs. Kinzer beaten completely for once. She had never been separated from her one boy since he was born, until she sent him to Grantley Academy ; and it seemed to her as if he had been gone for at least a year.

“Now, mother Kinzer,” said Ham Morris, “you had to let him come back for a few days. You couldn’t help it. I don’t see why you need feel so bad about it. Don’t cry any more.”

“Hamilton, be still, do ! Dabney, my dear boy !”

The girls didn’t cry a single tear ; but they did criticise their brother from head to foot, and their unanimous verdict was that he had improved wonderfully.

The Kinzer family were people who kept early hours, but they made that night an exception ; and one consequence was, that Dabney and Ham Morris were the first to be stirring the next morning.

“Dab,” said Ham, as he put a lighted wisp of paper in among the kindlings of the big parlor stove,

"I don't s'pose you've any thing more to tell me, but I've got something to tell you."

"What's that, Ham?"

"What do you think your mother said to me, after you went up stairs?"

"Can't guess. What was it?"

"No, I don't think you could guess; but she said, 'Hamilton, I'm going to send Dabney to college.' What do you think of that, young man?"

"College? Why, Ham, it's the one thing I've been dreaming of. It'll cost a good deal of money."

"Not a cent more'n she can afford. She told me, after that, of a letter Mr. Foster wrote her about it. The thing's settled, Dab, my boy."

Dab was in a manner struck dumb; and the silence of it held on to him, even at the breakfast-table, until Ham Morris tumbled the subject right out upon the table, and all the girls could join in the discussion of it.

"I'll only want one year at Grantley," said Dabney, "and I'll be as ready as Ford Foster. You see if I don't."

"Of course you will," said his mother, with something in her face and voice which put Dabney under bonds to justify such a degree of motherly confidence. She was beginning to believe him capable of almost any thing; and even Samantha and Keziah and Pamela found that all their former notions concerning their younger brother had undergone a change.

"Kezi," almost whispered Samantha after breakfast, "don't you see how he is growing?"

"Yes," added Pamela: "almost the first thing you know, Dabney will be a young gentleman."

"It's awful," said Keziah. "It seems as if it were only such a little while since he was in roundabouts, and played marbles."

"Marbles!" exclaimed Samantha scornfully, "think of our Dabney playing marbles! Why, it's only a few nights ago that he went to the opera with the Fosters."

Keziah was answered, and, indeed, somewhat humiliated; for she had asked more questions than anybody else about the opera, and the style of dress worn by Mrs. Foster and Annie. She had been snubbed, too, by Samantha, for not knowing the story of Faust and Mephistopheles.

There was one improvement in Dabney, for which his oldest unmarried sister was very grateful. Except in the very first moment of his return, he had not once called her "Sam;" and he was agreeably surprised to find that she seemed disposed to figure as his "next friend" and confidential adviser. It was not by any means a bad idea for either Samantha or Dabney; but Keziah and Pamela were just the girls to rebel promptly against any thing which might threaten to become a monopoly.

It was not a great while after breakfast before

Dabney thought he would take a stroll, and look at the "old house," and then at the village; but he might have known what would happen if he stood too long before the gate of what was now the home of Jenny Walters.

"Good-morning, Dabney. Are you afraid to come in?"

"How d'ye do, Jenny? I'm glad you haven't forgotten me."

"I? Why, you haven't changed a bit. You've only been away a few weeks."

Jenny ought not to have told a fib; for she was just then saying to herself,—

"He does not look like the same boy;" but for all that it was only a minute more before Dabney was in the little old parlor he knew so well, telling Jenny all about his doings in the city. She was even more curious about them than concerning any thing which had happened to him in Grantley. About these, to tell the truth, she was already pretty well advised; thanks to the fact that his sisters and mother lived next door, and that Dick Lee's mother did a large share of the washing and scrubbing of the Walters family. What Glorianna did not tell about her son and his friends was simply something Dick had failed to tell her, or that she had failed to imagine.

"Dabney," suddenly exclaimed Jenny at last, as she looked through the window, "here comes Samantha."

“Guess I might as well be starting for the village. I’ve some errands I want to do.”

“Come in again, Dabney. You haven’t told me half I want to know. Have you really learned any thing at the academy? Samantha’s at the door.”

“I’ll come, Jenny”—

Samantha had walked right in.

“You here, Dabney? I thought you were going to see Dick Lee.”

“So I am. I’m going to see everybody. Sorry I can’t have a sail on the bay. Then I’m coming back to go through the house and the barns.—Good-morning, Jenny.—Samantha, don’t you tell her a single thing you don’t know.”

He was out of the house quickly enough, after that; and he never knew how near Samantha came to having a quarrel with Jenny Walters, within five minutes. Jenny’s tongue, like that of Dick Lee, had not yet received the last touches of its education; and she was none too well pleased at having her morning call broken up. What she said, she did not precisely measure or remember until Samantha snapped out,—

“Now, Jenny, I will not have you run him down in such a way. And the Fosters are not at all proud or stuck up, and Dabney is wonderfully improved. He’s going to college, too, as soon as he is through at the academy.”

"I didn't run him down, and he is a very nice boy."

"And you've no idea what good letters he writes, and how well he is doing in his studies."

"So Mrs. Lee says about Dick. But is Dabney really to go to college? I had not heard of that."

"Of course he is. Just as soon as he can be prepared."

"I do so hope he will be able to get through."

"Get through! Indeed! Dabney get through! Why, Jenny Walters, what do you mean?"

"Now, Samantha, you know I like Dabney; but he is so young, and it does seem so queer to think of him going to college!"

Samantha Kinzer weighed at least half as much again as did the bright little lady she was talking with, and she had a good deal more color just then. She even grew rosier as she responded, —

"You haven't been out of your short dresses much longer than he's been out of his roundabouts, and he's every inch as tall as your father is."

"So he is, and it's a surprise to me every time I look at him. His new overcoat is almost the very pattern of mine."

"It's the latest style," said Samantha positively; and there was a chance for peace the moment they reached that subject, and they were both willing to get upon safer ground.

Meantime Dabney had pursued his intended tour of inspection. He kept it up, in a manner, all day long, with a continually increasing astonishment at discovering how different was the aspect of the most familiar places and things to the eyes of a man—himself, for instance—who had “travelled.”

CHAPTER X.

THE QUARTET AND BUGLE MUSIC.

THE world, or at least that part of its population which considers itself *the* "world," walks into each successive new year through the wide and slightly fantastic portal of the winter holidays. The great gate swings open upon Christmas as a species of hinge, and shuts behind the procession upon New Year's Day with astronomical precision. No human power can again unlock that gate; but there are always a great many people who would be glad to linger a few days longer in the neighborhood of it if they could.

No member of the quartet was able to do so, however; and they were all assembled in their "council-chamber" at Mrs. Myers's on the third evening of the new year.

They had been warmly welcomed by their landlady and her daughter, they had taken a winter view of the green and the academy building, they had even

caught a distant glimpse of Dr. Brandegee walking up the Main Street, and had had the happiness of exchanging a few dozen balls of well-packed snow with Joe and Fuz Hart; but their present assembly was the crown and finish of their brief vacation. There is not always so much real enjoyment in doing things, after all, as there is in telling about it afterwards, and in having other fellows tell what they also have been doing,—that is, if they know how to tell it, and are willing to give a fair chance all around.

Frank Harley would have talked more freely, perhaps, if he had not found a splendid batch of letters from India awaiting his return, and had not spent so long a time over them alone in his room.

“Tell you what, boys,” was one of his most forcible comments upon what Ford called his “Asiatic despatches,” “I wish they had a few thousand tons of the ice I’ve been skating over. What India needs is ice.”

“Yes,” said Ford solemnly, “it’ll never be a country I’d care to live in, till they change the climate.”

Dick Lee’s story mixed itself up a good deal with the latter half of Dabney’s; and the entire subject of the holidays in New York fell to the share of Ford Foster. He made a very distinct point of the number and success of his New Year’s calls.

It was grand while it lasted; but the end of it had to come, and was a little hastened by Dab himself.

"Glad we're all back again," he said suddenly. "Now, boys, for a year of awful work, and then for college."

"Not just that," said Ford, with a tone of precision. "All the colleges open shop in September. It'll be more'n a year before you get in."

"Only a year at Grantley, anyhow. I'm going to put it in. Then four years at college."

"That's what's the matter with me," slowly remarked Dick.

"What, going to college?" eagerly inquired Frank Harley.

"No," said Dick, with a grin that excluded the idea of any disappointment on his part. "I's got jes' dis year to go on. So I have got to learn in one year as much as all you will learn ~~in~~ five. I's got to dig in, I has."

"Do it, Dick, do it!" exclaimed Dabney. "Learn all there is."

"I will. An' jes' a little more. But there are cords of wood a-waitin' for me in de back yard."

"Cold weather ahead," said Ford. "Boys, let's go to bed. I fear I am threatened with a severe attack of Greek."

"Mine is mathematics," replied Dabney. "I can feel it in all my bones. What's yours, Frank?"

"Can't just say," said Frank. "Shouldn't wonder if I'd better let Dr. Brandegee have a look at my symptoms."

"He is our consulting physician," said Ford, "and he has had a large practice in such cases."

The doctor had not been unmindful of those four "cases" in particular; and, not many days afterwards,—a good deal sooner than either of them had quite prepared his mind for it,—they one by one found themselves in the much-revered study of the learned principal of Grantley Academy.

Such a place that was in which to be talked to about books! The very air of it seemed dense with wisdom, although the doctor was particular about his ventilation.

"Dab," remarked Ford, when he returned from his own special consultation, "if I could sit in that room an hour every evening for a month, I could go in sophomore instead of freshman."

"Did he give you any great deal of advice? He didn't me. Only kind of stirred me up with a long pole."

"Well, yes, I feel stirred up too; but I weigh more'n I did."

"What of?"

"Brandegee. Look at Frank. It's the same way with him. He's been half full of the doctor these three days; and Dick splits more wood in one hour than he used to do in two."

Ford had hit it about as nearly as it could be hit. The doctor had not piled upon them any uncalled-

for heap of extra studies, and he was well enough satisfied with the progress they were making ; but he had somehow given each of them to understand that they were proposing to work their way into the great fraternity of scholarly men to which he himself belonged. They were actually drawing daily nearer that upper level of life, and greater stature of manhood. It was enough to make any boy feel "heavier," to have a man of Dr. Brandegee's physical and mental proportions suggest to him the idea that they would soon be "keeping step." No small, light, lazy fellow could do that sort of thing ; and so every boy of them determined to march his best.

That was a remarkable winter, socially, in Grantley. Never before had there been so many "donation-parties," sewing-circle re-unions, mite-society gatherings, and there were even several out-and-out "invitation-parties," and a series of what were called "dances." The latter, indeed, were severely frowned upon ; and Mrs. Myers actually shuddered at the dinner-table, when she told Almira the names she had heard, of some young people who had been at "the ball," the night before.

As for the part of the quartet in all the sociability, very wise provisions had been made for its limitation. Dick Lee was not to be deluded into again, as he expressed it, "bein' made a show of." The other three had broken their social ice pretty well at Mr.

Fallow's, and they received more than one suggestion that their company would be agreeable; but Dabney put both his feet down at one line:—

“Donation means giving, as well as eating and having a good time. I don't give, and so I won't go. As for these other things—now, Ford, how do you like it, to play at being a man when all the girls call you a boy?”

Dabney had carried a bouquet into the Academy of Music behind one of the most beautiful and most elegantly dressed young ladies who entered it that evening; and he felt that some things were thenceforward impossible to him.

“Dabney,” said Ford, “we must not cut the village entirely, but for my part I'm not good enough to sew for the poor. I'd rather go to debating-society, if I've an evening to spare. By and by I may let some of the girls go with me.”

Frank Harley was not quite so settled as to his mind in the matter; for Mrs. Sunderland and one or two of her lady friends had in a manner “taken him up,” and he could not very well get away from them. He liked it, too, to tell the truth, and even persisted courageously in accepting several social invitations after Ford Foster acquired the ugly habit of asking him,—

“How many Hindu hymns did they make you sing this time?”

Besides, Frank's interest in the debating-society was what Ford described as "very damp indeed."

Even after he had heard both his friends declare their intention to try their tongues in public, upon the great question, "Was Christopher Columbus justified in discovering America?" his ambition to become an orator refused to take fire.

There was a certain degree of heroism, nevertheless, in the effort made in that direction by Dabney and Ford. They had talked about it, at intervals, all the fall, and even during the winter holidays; and one of the first things they each did after their return was to pay the required "one-dollar membership-fee," and subscribe their names upon the muster-roll of the society. It met, every week, in the small "hall" over the shoe-shop on the corner, opposite the academy,—the very hall in which were danced some of the minor "dances." The membership included a very motley variety, both as to age and acquirements; but the leading spirits were the editor of "The Bugle" and a pair of law-students. Audiences were reasonably certain; for the society brought its own young ladies with it, and admission was "free."

The whole quartet had attended, as a body, more than once; but somehow or other no opportunity came for either of the two who had rights in the matter to distinguish himself, until the Columbus question was announced.

“Dabney,” said Ford, “I don’t believe he was justified, and I’m going to try and prove it. It’s a duty I owe the society.”

“I’ve been reading something about Columbus,” was Dab’s unsatisfactory reply; but he did not say any more about it until the great evening came, and it was his turn to arise and say,—

“Mr. Speaker”—

“On which side is the gentleman to speak?” politely inquired the editor of “The Bugle,” from his place in the speaker’s chair.

“On the side of Columbus, sir. There never was a man more abused. He never meant to discover America. Never tried to. He didn’t discover it, either; and he died without knowing that he had done any mischief, sir. I hold that this debate is out of order.”

“Dab,” exclaimed Ford, in a loud whisper, “you’ve killed my speech, deader’n a hammer.”

The rest of the time of the society, that evening, was consumed in a series of frantic and tumultuous inquiries as to who did it if Columbus did not, and the like; but the set question was not again referred to, and when the clock struck nine the speaker hammered on his table.

“Order, gentlemen,—order! The society is adjourned for one week. We have at last settled the fact that America never was discovered, and there

isn't any such place. I shall publish the news in the next edition of 'The Bugle.'"

The evening's debate, however, had an important consequence for Dabney. Before he left the hall he was all but collared by the representative of the press.

"Mr. Kinzer, there is only one course for you to pursue. You must give your authority for your very remarkable assertions. The columns of 'The Bugle' are open to you."

"I'll do it," said Dabney.

"Stand up for Columbus," said Ford. "You're in for it."

"Mr. Ferrill, you shall hear from me at once."

"I hope so. There is nothing narrow or sectarian about 'The Bugle.' We are ready to give all sides a fair hearing."

Nearly three hours after that, Ford Foster rolled over, and sat up in bed.

"Dabney, how much later are you going to sit up? Are you making Bugle-music yet?"

"Got it most done, Ford. It's the first time I ever wrote any thing to be printed, and I don't know any more about punctuation"—

"Oh, never mind! Go to bed. They've got bushels and bushels of commas and colons, and that sort of thing, at the 'Bugle' office. Ferrill knows where to put 'em in."

"I guess it'll do, then. Wonder if he'll have room for it all?"

"Of course he will. Ain't you sleepy? I am."

There was room made for Dab's article, surely, and for a decidedly caustic review of it from the pen of Mr. Ferrill; and Dabney Kinzer spent the day of the publication of that "Bugle" in a high fever.

His first sensation, of course, was a chill; for he learned more concerning his deficiencies in English composition from a perusal of his own effort in print, than could have been taught him in a month by a college professor. Mr. Ferrill's type-setter had indeed put in an abundance of punctuation; but, by express command, he had not taken the liberty of correcting any other grammatical defects.

The wonder was, although Dabney did not know it, that these latter were so few; and there was no one to tell him, right away, the precise opinion passed upon his article by either Dr. Brandegee or Mr. Fallow, or any other Grantley authority. Still less could he guess at the remarks made by Mr. Foster and Mrs. Foster and Annie, or by the Kinzer and Morris families, or by Jenny Walters, when they perused the several "Bugles" Ford so carefully sent them.

"I declare," said Mr. Foster in particular, "I am right about that boy. He will do."

And Dr. Brandegee remarked to his wife,—

“ Yes, dear : it’s a little ragged, and he takes too many of his facts for granted, but he is only sixteen. There’s a good deal in that boy.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE QUARTET DOES SOME WINTER FISHING.

As a general rule the quartet, or some member of it, managed to receive for itself any mail matter coming to it; but it was barely a week after the publication of Dab Kinzer's contribution to "The Bugle," and just before the issue of another number, in which he was again overhauled, that Miss Almira Myers happened to call first at the post-office. She was particularly glad she had done so when the mail for her house was handed over to her; and she exhibited that pile of letters to her mother with an air of mysterious exultation.

"Mr. Harley has no sisters in America, mother."

"It is a lady's writing."

"And Mr. Kinzer has no lady relatives in New York, that I know of. Besides, there are three for him from Long Island, and only one of 'em is from his mother. I know her hand. Mr. Foster, too—What can all those boys have been up to?"

"Put them all on the supper-table, Almira. I don't mean to meddle with any thing that isn't any of my business."

That was well said, but it was said after she had very keenly scrutinized the outside of every one of those white envelopes.

There it lay, therefore, that suspicious collection of letters, just south of the tea-tray, when the boys came down to their supper.

There was a grim smile upon the face of Mrs. Myers, and another, meant to be arch and playful, upon the pink lips of Miss Almira. Both smiles were in a manner successful: for Frank Harley looked awkward, Dab looked astonished, as they picked out the articles addressed to them; and they would surely have been driven into blushing, for they knew not what, if Ford Foster had not so courageously held up a dainty square of cream-tinted elegance with,—

"Miss Almira, do you see that? She has written to me! Can I depend on having your advice as to the contents of my reply?"

That was pretty cool for a boy of sixteen; but, as he said after the up-stairs privacy was regained,—

"It wouldn't do, you know, to be smiled at in any such way as that. Now I'm going to find out whom it is from."

"Just what I'm going to do," said Dabney; but

Frank Harley was just then sitting upon the edge of the bed in his own room.

“What!” exclaimed Dab, half a minute later. “Look a’ here, Ford. This is some of your work. Did you send Jenny Walters a copy of that ‘Bugle’?”

“Certainly: I distributed them far and wide, that the truth about our friend Christopher might become more generally known.”

Dabney was silent, but he read his letter over again. It was not a very long one, and perhaps the most interesting part of it read,—

“Thank you for the copy of the paper you sent me, with your contribution marked. Samantha brought her copy over to show me. Did you really spell Columbus with a small ‘c’? I would hardly have expected that. The rest of the spelling is very good, and I am glad you tell so plainly where you found so much geography. Some folks might have imagined you knew it all yourself. Samantha quarrelled with me for saying I didn’t believe you did.”

There was more of it, but it was all a good deal like Jenny Walters; and Dabney picked up his next envelope with a feeling of doubt and hesitation. He recognized the neat and “finished” hand of the superscription, but it required nerve to tear that paper. He did tear it, however, and read, and ex-

perienced a pleasant thrill from head to foot; and then he blushed to his eyes, and was conscious of a troubled, sore feeling a short distance below his upper vest-button. There was no doubt but what Annie Foster had felt that she was writing to somebody a great deal younger than herself.

"My dear Dabney, mother and I desire to congratulate you upon your historical essay in 'The Bugle';" and they did so, over two pages, in a way which reconciled Dabney to the perfidy of Ford Foster in sending away so many copies of that newspaper. His mother, too, and Samantha, had a good deal to say about it; and, when he put down the last item of his unexpected mail, he sighed deeply. He was glad of those letters,—particularly, now he thought of it again, of the one from Jenny Walters; only he did not like to be made to look as if he had fished for it with a *Bugle*.

"Ford," he said, "did you imitate my handwriting on the wrapper?"

"Never thought of it. All I did was to disguise my own. Don't interrupt me any more just now."

Dab was again silent until Ford laid aside the square, cream-colored envelope, and then he remarked thoughtfully,—

"We've got to answer 'em all, Ford. Have you read all of yours? How many did you get?"

"Only two outside of the family. I shall not

require any help from Miss Almira or from her respected mother. Write your own letters, Dabney. It's easy enough after you get the hang of it."

Dab had his doubts on that score, but they did not carry him down-stairs with his correspondence.

The quartet had entered upon a new stage of its earthly existence; but it was one, alas! in which Mr. Richard Lee could have no part or lot. That stage of life in which young men begin to receive letters from their lady friends had come somewhat suddenly, to be sure, to the other three. Some day in the far future it might as suddenly come to Dick; but the very fact of its postponement served, with other things, to point out the steadily deepening chasm of separation between his path of life and theirs. It was a chasm which was opening slowly and healthily, however, and all but unconsciously, both to him and to them. They were all preparing to win prizes of life, and win them fairly; but Dick's winnings, though every ounce as genuine and as valuable, could hardly come to him in the same form as theirs.

There was a good deal of hard work for Dick to do, that winter, in earning the "chores" half of his board; but it was nothing at all to the toil he performed with his books and his pen.

"Only this year," he said to himself, again and again. "Then I don't know what's a-coming."

Perhaps it was just as well for him to be shut out

from all social temptations at such a time; but it was better for his friends that they were not, for they gave their books quite as much time as was likely to be useful.

"No, Dabney," remarked Ford, during a discussion of the subject of additional study hours. "I've heard my father say that if a man knew too much when he went to college, he was sure not to learn any thing after he got there. You'll know too much, if you ain't careful. I move we go a-skating."

They did a good deal of that, for the ice was unusually good. Frank Harley had learned how during the winter holidays; Ford knew, after he had bumped himself handsomely upon three distinct sheets of ice; and Dab Kinzer only needed a little fresh practice to show that he was entirely at home on his "irons."

The debating-society could not be neglected, of course, after so successful a beginning; but Dabney soon discovered that for a ready use of his tongue, under any circumstances, Ford Foster could beat him, two to one.

"I shall never be the debater he is," he said to himself, weeks before the end of the winter term; nor was it until a long time afterwards that the additional conviction dawned upon him, that he did not by any means wish to be. Still, Ford won for himself a good deal of debating-society reputation, and

was quite likely to find out the value of it for himself, in due time—or to have it explained to him by his father.

As for the correspondence, once they had managed to pen their first replies, all around, there was no danger but what they would have a reasonably regular repetition of that task. Even Annie Foster deemed it her duty to send additional letters to Dabney, which were sure to contain kind words from her mother; and neither of them guessed how those epistles were waited for, or how deep an influence they were exerting upon the rapidly expanding character of the youth who read and treasured them. Dabney would have fought any two boys in Grantley, or done or refused to do any other thing he could imagine, rather than have felt ashamed to read and answer his next letter from Annie Foster. He loved his own sisters, to be sure, and thought them the best girls in the world; but they were not angels, and, without expressing it in that precise way, he had a species of dim, white-robed idea that Annie was,—or her mother, or both of them. Not in any of his letters to his mother or Samantha did he mention the fact that he had other correspondents; but he had never been more faithful in his replies to them. As for Jenny Walters, it was a positive luxury to get her breezy and caustic accounts of the course of events in the old home neighborhood, and to tell her in re-

turn as much about every thing in Grantley as Dab could imagine she would care to hear.

“Dabney,” said Ford one Friday evening, “Dick says his wood is all split, and he has a Saturday out of jail. What can we do for him? I’d lend him my gun, if there was any thing to shoot.”

“Maybe there is,” said Dab: “I’ve been making some inquiries.”

“Well, what do you know?”

“I know we can get to Green Pond as easy as we did in summer.”

“What’ll you do when you get there? Skate, or slide down hill?”

“Do? Why, pickerel. Catch ‘em through the ice. May shoot some rabbits in the woods. If you fellows want to go, I’m in.”

“Hurrah! Frank, do you hear that? Where’s Dick?”

It was a grand break in the frosty routine of their winter work. They even clubbed their odd quarters, and hired a pony and a box-sleigh to carry their guns and tackle, and save them so long a plod over snow-roads. Two dollars covered their entire expenses for the day, and they were off in a half an hour after breakfast.

Dick’s contribution to the outfit consisted namely of an axe from the woodpile, and a proposition to cut any number of pickerel-holes in the ice of Green

Pond. Nothing half so exciting had been heard of by any of the Grantley Academy boys since the first snow came ; and Ford Foster even suggested that deer, bears, and other wild animals had been known to wander down from the mountains in such a winter as that.

“We'll get something, anyhow,” said Dabney. “We haven't any dogs ; and so we must shoot at anything, first chance we get.”

They managed to get their horse and sleigh into an available hollow, within a half a mile of their intended fishing, and then the fun began.

A thaw and freeze had left the snow-crust in fair condition for walking, but there would be an occasional breaking through and floundering out. It was just when Ford Foster was up to his armpits in one of these adventures, that his ears were saluted by a loud report, and then another.

“Hand me your gun, Ford!—Quick, Dick!—There he is. Take him.”

Ford had almost mechanically surrendered his wonderful fowling-piece ; but he clambered desperately out of that snow-packed hollow, in time to see Dick Lee raise the “old Continental” to his shoulder.

“Hurrah!” shouted Dabney. “One rabbit for him, and one for me.”

Frank Harley had been a little in the rear when

that magnificent opportunity dawned ; but he never stopped to look at the game, and walked right forward while the others were loading. It was as if he had known that the rabbit Dab had missed would turn in his tracks, and scamper back across his path, within range.

Bang ! bang ! "I've got him ! "

"Boys," said Ford, "is this what you call fair play ? Bring me a rabbit, and I'll shoot him."

"Load up," said Dabney. "Are we all ready ? Now for the lake and some pickerel."

Forward it was, until, from the "rise" beyond which they expected a view of Green Pond, Frank Harley exclaimed,—

"Well, now, where is it ? "

"Down there under the snow," shouted Dabney. "I can see the ice in three places, but there isn't an air-hole."

"Mus' be one somewhar'," said Dick Lee, "but I guess I'll make anoder soon enough."

Even a rabbit that scurried across their path did not delay their descent of the slope to the lake. Ford levelled his gun, indeed ; but by the time it was at his shoulder the "white jumper" was out of sight.

"No use," said Ford. "I'm keeping myself back for large game."

Dick Lee was right about the "air-hole ;" for he

found one, and it did not need any great amount of axe-work to prepare it for fishing purposes.

"Now, boys," said Dab, "there hasn't a soul been here this winter. We'll get something. Let's take turns. Ford, you haven't any rabbits. Try for a pickerel."

The guns were laid aside, and the hooks and lines were out before Dick Lee ceased his ice-chopping.

"'Fraid you've scared the fish," said Ford, as he made his first cast.

"Jes' you wait. Dey hasn't had a good feed for t'ree months."

"Hullo!"

"Hold on, Ford. Don't let him pull you in. It's ice-water."

"Pull me in! He's a big one. Here he comes!"

"Pound 'n' a half," said Dick. "Good as a rabbit, any day."

There was no mistake about that air-hole, or the fish under it; and the quartet were well rewarded for their chilly ride, and their floundering through the snow. It always costs something to get any thing worth while, but they had not looked for such luck as they had that day.

"Shall we put these fish in 'The Bugle'?" asked Frank Harley, when at last they started for home.

"Not a bit of it," replied Ford. "We've done enough for that young man Ferrill. He wasn't half

fair about the Columbus matter. We can't let him use up Green Pond the way he did the history of America."

One more rabbit to Dab Kinzer's gun, on their return climb up the slope. Then they found their horse and sleigh where they had left them; and their one and only sporting excursion for that winter was over. No other such Saturday consented to come; and snowy, rainy, thawy days would not answer the purpose.

"Ford," said Dabney, after they were once more in their room, "don't you think you'll have a better appetite for Greek, after you've eaten one of those pickerel?"

"That is my idea. But how about rabbits and mathematics? — Frank, have you any letters to write?"

"Letters?"

"Of the kind you send North. You got your first letter-bite through the holiday ice, you know. You'll have to give it all up when summer comes. Use your good, nice, cold, snowy weather while you've got it, my boy."

"It won't be a great while till spring, now," said Dabney; "but the spring vacation is only for two weeks. Won't I have some fishing then?"

CHAPTER XII.

A BREAK IN THE KINZER FAMILY.

DICK LEE decided not to go home for the spring vacation when it came. The cost of the trip had a great deal to do with the matter; and the protests of his mother were answered, if not silenced, by Dick's assurance that she had no idea how much he would learn in those two weeks, all alone by himself.

"I s'pose dat's so," explained Glorianna to her husband when she read Dick's letter. "He won't be boddered wid de oder boys nor de 'cad'my. Dey mus' interrup' 'im awful w'en dey're all dar."

Frank Harley, poor fellow, was at last, as Ford told him, "a captive to the Mohawks," since he could no longer find a sufficient excuse for not going home with the Hart boys. The oft-repeated invitation from their parents came to him now in so kindly and urgent a form, that there was no getting away from it.

"You must bear it, Frank," said Ford. "Take

your torture without a quiver or a cry. You may live through it."

It was a doleful outlook nevertheless; and the worst of it was to discern the suppressed gleefulness of Joseph and Foster Hart when they met him on the green, and completed their arrangements for the journey home.

"Wish we could be with you," said both his friends in a breath, as they bade him good-by.

Ford Foster knew he would have a good time, but he strove in vain to persuade Dabney to so much as make a call at the house on his way through the city.

"Dab!" he exclaimed, after they were fairly in the cars, and there had been time to consider the matter, "what's got into you? Mother and Annie would be glad to see you. Do you know you're looking blue? Was there any bad news in your letter this morning?"

"Not exactly. But I think they should have told me about it before. Mother says she didn't, for fear it might distract my mind from my studies."

Ford's face was all sympathy as he again inquired,—

"Is it very bad?"

"I might as well out with it; and you may tell your folks, of course. Samantha is to be married, day after to-morrow, to a city doctor by the name of

Cummings. I'll just about get home in time for the wedding."

"Only one day, after you get there, to prepare your mind in! It's hard on you, Dabney. But then, what if Cummings should turn out to be as good a fellow as **Ham Morris**?"

"A doctor!" almost snapped Dabney. "Lives in the city. Ham was a next-door neighbor."

"You'll have a city hotel of your own, Dabney. It's a good thing for you. Good thing for him too: he'll always have a picture of health in the house."

Dab thought of Samantha's rosy face, and had to join in Ford's chuckle; but he had not confessed the real secret of his mental disturbance.

There had been an important family secret kept from him, for he did not know how long; and his pride was deeply hurt. It was so terribly plain a way of telling him that he was only a boy,—a schoolboy,—upon whose weak mind heavy family affairs were not to be carelessly unloaded.

"Even Pamela must have known all about it, and she isn't two years older than I am. I'll just let them know what I think about it, when I get there."

He promised Ford, however, that, if he came over to the city during the vacation, he would surely come and see him; and then he nursed his offended dignity all the way home.

Mrs. Kinzer had not been so very secretive, after

all ; for the arrival of the wedding-day at that precise date had been largely due to a *change* in the plans and fortunes of Dr. Cummings. Precisely *how* and where that gentleman had met and wooed and won Samantha, were questions to which Dabney received an answer from his sister Keziah, some days later ; but their engagement might have awaited the due extension of the doctor's practice, had it not been for the will of a distant relative, placing him at once in possession of a respectable residence and some additional property. It was likely, as Ford said, that Dabney would have "a hotel of his own," in the city. Mrs. Kinzer insisted on making Samantha's wedding portion as large as Miranda's had been ; for she went over, herself, and furnished that house nicely from top to bottom. Then she wrote to Dabney the letter which gave his pride the blues.

There was nobody to meet him at the railway-station when he arrived, and he carried his own bag to the house without any help.

The whole family was not at the windows this time. The lady part of it was in Samantha's room, discussing the fit of garments which were to be worn by her upon the morrow ; and Ham Morris had gone to the village on an errand. Dabney opened the front door, and walked in, with the sad idea slowly dawning upon him that a first return, from a first absence, never occurs twice in the history of any

boy ; and it was but a very little later when he discovered that there is never anybody else in any family half so important as a young lady who is just about to put on a different name and be taken away.

It was the bride that-was-to-be, herself, who gave Dabney his first out-and-out consolation ; for the eager enthusiasm of Samantha's greeting surpassed even that of his mother. Mrs. Kinzer did not cry at all this time, while the future Mrs. Cummings wept beautifully. Dab felt better after that.

"I mustn't say a word," thought he, "to give her any pain, at such a time as this. Sam is the best-hearted girl in the world, and I must stand by her now. I'm her only brother."

He was indeed the "only man in the family," if Ham Morris were to be counted out ; and all the rest of them were not long in discovering that Dabney was a little disposed to stand upon his dignity.

"I'm glad," remarked his mother to Miranda, "that he holds his head up so well, and keeps his shoulders back. So many young men get stoop-shouldered over their books. He seems to feel kind o' sober, too, about Samantha."

"Why, so we all do. I'm glad Dabney is so thoughtful, at his age. It's really wonderful."

The widow was evidently pondering something, for a moment ; and then she suddenly exclaimed,—

"Miranda, there's something on Dabney's mind.

I must have a talk with him, as soon as I can, after Samantha goes. Dear me!"

It was by no means often that Mrs. Kinzer reached the sighing point, for she was well accustomed to carrying a heavy and assorted stock of responsibilities ; but her heart was a warm one, and it was a little full just now. If Dabney had been older and wiser, he would have better understood the family crisis.

As it was, they missed him from the house shortly after dinner ; and when he again entered it, about nightfall, he carried his rod in one hand, and a fine string of flounders in the other.

"Must say you've had good luck," said Ham. "Out on the bay?"

"Yes ; and I tell you it did me good to smell salt water, and pull a boat again."

He could talk more freely now, and he did so, until Pamela slyly whispered to him,—

"I saw you. How long did you stay in Jenny Walters's before you went a-fishing ?"

"It wasn't of any use to go for flounders," said Dab, "till just before the tide turned."

The next morning Dabney was up bright and early ; and, if he had been Dr. Cummings himself, he could hardly have dressed with greater care. Oh, how he did wish, as he took his last look in his glass, for even the first downy tokens of moustache or beard upon the smooth face reflected there !

“I’ll show ‘em yet,” he muttered. “I believe Ham Morris understands me better than mother or the girls do. I wonder what sort of a fellow the doctor really is, anyhow.”

It was not likely the coming bridegroom would occupy himself, after his arrival, with any very prolonged study of Samantha’s schoolboy brother; but it was a dead certainty that the schoolboy would study him intensely. Dab was, in fact, preparing himself to be somewhat exacting as to the basis upon which he would accept his new relation.

“I’ll put up with a good deal, for Samantha’s sake,” he said, as he went down to breakfast; “but no brother-in-law of mine shall put on airs with me. Not if I have four of them.”

He had a lesson coming to him that morning, and it brought all the color into his face when it came. A carriage stopped at the gate; a tall, dark, fine-looking man of thirty or thereabouts stepped lightly out; and Dabney instinctively followed his mother as she hurried to the door.

Her greeting of the stranger was heartiness itself; and she added,—

“I will show you to your room at once.”

“My friends will be here soon.”

“Ah! doctor, this is my only son, Dabney.”

Dab’s hand went out politely; but the grasp which met it was so very frank and warm, the dark bright

eyes looked into his own so smilingly while yet they seemed to be reading him through and through, that he was "absolutely compelled to meet that man half way," as he afterwards explained to himself the sudden change in his feelings and his manner.

Mrs. Kinzer stood by, with a look of motherly pride upon her face, during that brief hand-shaking; but her keen perceptions had by no means missed the fact that Dabney had not waited to be sent for.

"He saw it was his place to be out here with me. He is a real little man. I never saw a fellow come up as he is doing."

Time was getting precious now, for the wedding must all be managed in a way to meet the requirements of the railway time-table. The train which was to bear away the happy pair would not by any means consent to wait for them.

Precious time, but enough of it; and all things passed off well.

Dabney found himself absorbing, continually, a stronger appreciation of the good qualities of his new brother-in-law; and, at the same time, he was compelled to admit that he had never before seen Samantha look so well.

"She isn't as beautiful as Annie Foster, but she is just splendid to-day. I didn't know she was so handsome, that's a fact."

"Dey's jes' fine," came to his ears, in a sup-

pressed whisper, at that moment ; and he turned to see, beaming from the sitting-room doorway into the parlor, the broad black face of Glorianna Lee.

“ I declare ! I must go and tell her all about Dick, soon as this thing’s over.”

It was soon over, after that ; but Dabney could not get away at once. He was wanted at home. He was made to feel that his mother actually needed him, and that his place, as her only son, was to remain and comfort her. Even Keziah and Pamela seemed more glad to have him in the house than they had been before ; and Dabney’s wounded pride, and his sore sense of having been snubbed and overlooked, grew sleepy under all that soothing. They nodded, in fact, until they, his cherished swellings, slept so soundly, he felt ashamed of their ever having been awakened.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST DAYS AT GRANTLEY.

WITH the exception of the pleasure he derived from a renewal of his acquaintance with salt water, there was very little excitement in the remainder of Dabney Kinzer's first spring vacation. Ford Foster came over for a sail with him and Ham Morris in "The Swallow," and Dabney returned the visit by spending a day in the city.

He learned something that day. Up to the hour when he entered the Foster parlor, and sat down to wait for Annie and her mother to come in, he had never fully realized what it was to be "bashful." To be sure, he had suffered from brief and passing attacks ; but it had not at any time taken hold of him in such a way as to make him wish he were in some other room. If it had not been for Ford's presence, and the effort which that compelled him to make, he would surely have betrayed himself. As it was, nothing saved him but the extreme heartiness of his

welcome, and the eagerness of Annie to hear all about Samantha's wedding. It was peculiarly pleasant to find how strong an interest Ford's mother and sister still took in their old neighbors. Mr. Foster came home to dinner that day, which was a thing he was not always able to do. Dabney could hardly remember afterwards that the sharp-eyed lawyer had asked him many questions; and yet he had a settled conviction that he had been drawn into telling at least as much as he knew concerning the professional standing and financial resources of Dr. Cummings.

"I must learn how he does it. He's been making a witness of me. I don't care: I got a good deal out of him."

He did not know that Mr. Foster had afterwards paid him what was meant for a high compliment, when he said to his wife,—

"Questions? Yes, my dear. He asks them very well. Several times I told him just what he wanted to know, almost before I saw that he was asking for it. I am very glad they are going to send him to college."

Dabney had been carefully taught the meanness of what is called "cunning," but he also knew how unmannерly was "curiosity;" and so, in trying to keep away from both errors, he had once more stumbled up a step in the good opinion of Mr. Foster.

Ford received a letter from Frank, the very next day ; and he at once sat down and wrote to Dabney about it.

"He's alive yet, Dab. In fact, he says his health is very good ; and uncle Hart and aunt Maria are doing their best to make him happy, but they don't guess what those young savages have done to make him miserable. It's all a joke, you know. One joke after another, and no ringmaster on hand to give the clowns a horsewhipping. We must get up a ring for them, after they get back to Grantley. I'm inclined to think, though, from what he says, that he's been helping himself a little, in a quiet way. You know what lots of queer things he can do with his fingers."

Frank Harley, to tell the truth, had not even permitted Joe and Fuz themselves to know quite all of the means he had so skilfully taken for his own protection. Some of their best-laid "jokes" had very mysteriously broken to pieces on their hands ; and they had several times fallen quite stupidly, as it seemed to them, into deftly hidden traps of their own setting. The story of it all would keep for telling in the "studio" at Mrs. Myers's ; and, meantime, it was by no means a bad lesson for a boy like Frank, who had been brought up almost too carefully, and may have needed a little of what the world calls "hustling." He was sure to get his share of it some day : for the world has a good many grown-up "Hart

boys" in it, of one kind and another ; and the mild-mannered, quiet youngsters who are to go out among them cannot too early be put upon their guard, and taught to "look out."

On the whole, therefore, the three boys who went home did fairly well ; and during the whole of those two weeks Dick Lee "earned his board."

It was gardening-time, and Mrs. Myers had a very comfortable kitchen-garden in the rear of the house. It began with beans and radishes, close up by the woodshed ; and it stretched away back into a potato-patch and some stunted, unpruned apple-trees.

"You won't have to go to the academy these days," said Mrs. Myers, kindly, to Richard. "I'll give you all your mornings and evenings, and you can spend the rest of your time in the garden. It will be just the thing for your health. I've been speaking to Dr. Brandegee about it. You have been too much confined to your books."

If Dick could have entertained any idea of a rebellion, in the absence of "Captain Dab," the mention of the name of the academy-principal would have crushed it in its cradle. There was no doubt but what Mrs. Myers was right about the healthiness of spading and hoeing, and yet he could not help feeling that his landlady was not losing any thing by her bargain with him.

He was leaning on his rake, one day, staring down

at the faint green lines across the lettuce-bed, when a loud, cheery voice behind him exclaimed,—

“Hullo, Dick! is that the kind of geometry you’ve been up to?”

“Is dat you, Dab? Well, now, if I just ain’t glad to see you! Have they all come?”

“Ford’s in the house, and Frank’ll be here this evening.”

“Won’t I be tickled to hear de ole bell ring again! But I’s learned a heap dis vacation.”

He had indeed, even from his books; but he was quite contented to say very little about it, and to sit all that evening, almost open-mouthed, listening to the exchange of their experiences by his friends, and asking eager questions of Dabney concerning every thing and everybody along shore.

“Last term for us in Grantley, boys,” said Ford Foster, as they all four marched across the green together the next morning. “Wonder if we’ll have to stand an examination at the end of it.”

“Yes, I guess so,” replied Frank Harley; “but not much of a one. We’re not to be graduated, you know.

“It won’t be any thing to the one we’ll have to stand when we get to college,” began Dabney; but Dick Lee promptly corrected him with,—

“Before they let you in; that’s so!”

“Richard,” said Ford, “do you know how many colleges have applied for us three already?”

“I dunno. Do you?”

“Just you ask Dr. Brandegee. I can’t keep count of them myself. If Columbus had known how many colleges there would be here some day, he would never have dared to discover America.”

“Hear de ole bell!” suddenly exclaimed Dick. “Ain’t it music?”

He was yet to find that even the renewed activity of the academy bell was not to release him altogether from garden-duty. It was only a few mornings afterwards, that Dabney overheard him muttering to himself,—

“It’s jes’ awful, de worms in dat gardin. Ebery wiggler ob ‘em kind o’ sayin’ ‘Why don’t you go a-fishin’? Heah we be.’”

Dick was altogether unable to act upon even so plain a hint as that; but his friends could take it, and they found themselves drifting once more into the routine of school life so smoothly and easily, that Ford Foster declared,—

“Seems to me as if we’d kind o’ been having a big allowance of Saturday, and this was only next week.”

There were greater changes making, and preparing to be made, in and about some of the homes they had left behind them.

Glorianna Lee had been only half satisfied, after all, with the fact that “Miss Kinzer” had seen her

Dabney, while she herself had been denied the pleasure of hugging Dick. And Richard, with the best of intentions, had written her a glowing account of the wonders he was working in the Myers garden.

"Gard'n!" she exclaimed. "We hasn't nebber done a t'ing wid our patch. 'Cept some taters and water-millions. Tell ye wot, ole man, we'll jes' take hole now. Dick shall hab a gard'n to work in, w'en he gits home."

That was the first complete idea relating to Dick's education which old Bill Lee had been fully able to grapple with; and he went to work upon his "patch," after a fashion which cost him something in the line of flounders and clams. It was quite likely Dick would find a new Eden ready for him, every inch equal to that of Mrs. Myers.

"Somet'ing dar besides taters and water-millions dis time. Bill, did he say squashes? No, I doesn't want no artichokes in Dick's gard'n. Dar's got to be a heap o' radishes. Is you done gone suah 'bout de beet-seed? I'd jes' feel awful if it didn't come up. I'll do de weedin'."

At the Kinzer and Morris homestead, matters came down to their new level somewhat slowly. It was by no means easy for Mrs. Kinzer to familiarize herself with the fact that Samantha's return from her wedding-trip would take her to another home than that in which she had been brought up. Mi-

randa's had but settled the whole family in a larger house, with the addition of Hamilton Morris as a permanent and every way comfortable member.

Dr. Cummings had actually taken Samantha away; and Mrs. Kinzer found herself now and then looking very tenderly at Keziah and Pamela, and giving a good deal more careful thought than formerly, to those of their young gentleman acquaintances who had happened to "drop in" more frequently than others.

"The right kind of men are wonderfully scarce in this neighborhood," she said to herself; "but I can't have the rest of them settling so far away from me. And then they're so young and inexperienced! Think of Keziah, now, setting up in a house of her own. Why, she's only twenty-one!"

She said all that to Ham Morris, and his only reply was a subdued chuckle. Hamilton was often a very unsatisfactory fellow, especially when his mother-in-law talked to him about the girls or about Dabney.

It was in some respects a trying time to Keziah, she being the next in due order as "the young lady of the house," and entitled to be spoken of as "Miss Kinzer." Pamela had in a manner found a solace. She had developed a sudden intimacy—a little odd, considering the noticeable difference in their ages—with Jenny Walters, and one of its earlier conse-

quences had been the accidental discovery of the fact that Jenny and Dab were correspondents. There is nothing like such a secret as that, to bring two girls together; although, to do her justice, Jenny was as frank as the day about it, so far as Pamela was concerned. All she seemed to care about was that it should not become the common property of the Kinzer family.

"You see," said Jenny wisely, "I don't so much mind your seeing his letters; but suppose he should be corresponding with other girls, and tell me about them? It would be just like Dab."

Pamela hardly agreed with her upon that point. But even Dab's letters were temporarily lost sight of a little later, in a great excitement which came to both of them. In fact, it came to the whole village; and, as Jenny herself said, —

"Why, Pamela, it has almost waked up mother."

Not but what Mrs. Walters was one of the most conscientious and regular of human beings, in the observance of all her habitual duties of sleeping and waking; but she was one of those calm and pillowy women, of a blond type and of never-disturbed health, upon whom all the disturbances of life made no manner of permanent impression. Any kind of punch does but leave a dent in a pillow, that disappears and leaves no wrinkle, after a pat and a shake have restored the customary puff and roundness.

Nobody could guess how she had happened to become the life-partner of so stirring and active a driver as was Squire Walters.

It was from her father that Jenny inherited her black eyes and some of the peculiarities of her disposition; but Mrs. Kinzer, keenest of judges, had been heard to express an opinion that "there's more of her grandmother in Jenny than there is of anybody else. I only hope she'll turn out as good a woman."

The Squire was a "driver,"—a short, sturdy, beetle-browed, impressive man, with a marked disposition to hector his subordinates, and an equally marked tendency to take off his hat to any man who had enough money in bank to entitle him to such a token of respect.

Ham Morris had said of him,—

"He isn't exactly mean. He can spend money when he wants to; but if there's any thing he could kneel down to quicker than to a hundred-dollar bill,—well, it would be a five-hundred-dollar bill."

That kind of man is very apt to make money. He is sure to try for it. Squire Walters had tried for it, all his life; and of late he had seemed to find his way into one of those paths which lead men on to what is called "success."

First it was one thing, and then it was another; and his neighbors shook their heads, and said the

Squire was "spekkilatin'." But that spring, just when they all noticed the fact that his new house was about finished, they were astounded by the news that he had made a trade of it for a farm-property near the village, and that the Walters family would shortly remove to "the city."

"The fact is," said Ham Morris, when he carried the news home, "he's been keeping his own secrets for a good while. The Squire is rich."

"Do you hear how much?" nervously inquired Mrs. Kinzer.

"Some say one thing, and some another. It's been done in land, and patent-rights, and stocks, and mines, and produce, and shaving notes, and pretty much every thing, but he's done it. He's going to the city to live on it. I'd just as lief he would go."

"I shall miss Jenny so much," remarked Pamela. "I was really beginning to like her very much."

So she went over to Jenny's, that very evening, and found that it was all true about the removal.

"Father says," said Jenny, "that our city house will be ready for us in a fortnight. Then, Pamela, if you and Keziah want to come over and do your shopping, you can come and see me. I'm just wild over it. I've always had a kind of cooped-up feeling here."

Pamela looked around her. There was no denying the coopiness of the old Kinzer homestead.

"No," exclaimed Jenny, as her quick eyes noticed the look: "I don't mean your house, or ours, or the new one; I mean the whole village. Now, Pamela, wouldn't you prefer the city yourself?"

Of course she would, and the very thought of it made her silent. Samantha was to live in the city. Annie Foster lived there. Now Jenny Walters was going; and Pamela would have been more or less than human if she could have altogether resisted the weird fascination of the vision which was forced upon her mind's eye.

She never thought, however, of her younger brother, and of how a similar picture had been painted for him, before that, and how it had been extended to a whole gallery of visions, expanding to untold distances beyond the illuminated stage of the Academy of Music, with Mephistopheles in the foreground, showing it to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROSPECTS OF SEPARATION. — SALT-WATER AND SEA-SICKNESS.

IT was only a few days later that Mr. Foster made to his wife and daughter a communication which all but took their breath away.

“Europe?” exclaimed Annie, at the end of it.

“A whole summer in Europe?” said her mother.

“Yes, my dear: I did not care to speak of it until the matter was settled. My business will compel me to reach England early in June. After that is attended to, we can go where we please. Need not return till about the first of September. I want a long vacation as much as anybody else does.”

“But what will Ford do?” anxiously inquired his mother.

“Ford? Oh! of course I’ve thought about him. He will stay at Grantley to the end of his term. I will have a steamer-passage secured for him, and he can meet me in London.”

“Think of him,—crossing the ocean all alone!”

“What, Ford?”

“Why, mother!” said Annie, “he will just enjoy it.”

“Do him good,” said Mr. Foster emphatically. “Teach him self-reliance. Besides, if I can have him with me in Europe for a few weeks, I’ll double the value of his college course for him. Make him understand what it’s for, and what he must get out of it. We will wake up his ideas for him.”

What would Ford have thought if he had heard his own father say that of him?

He did not know what to think, when the same mail brought him three letters from home, all of them relating to the intended summer in the Old World. He could not keep to himself the contents of those letters for five minutes after he had read them, and the whole quartet happened to be assembled in the “studio.”

“Golly!” said Dick Lee.

“Ford,” suggested Dab Kinzer, “I’ll get Ham Morris to lend you ‘The Swallow’ to go over in.”

“Won’t you have a time, though!” said Frank.

“Boys,” replied Ford, “what do you think of my going to college by way of Europe? Did you ever hear the like of that before?”

“You’ll forget all you know about Greek by the time you get back,” said Dab, with an expression of doubt on his face.

"I? No, Dabney. I shall take a grammar with me, and go over the nouns and verbs at sea. I shall even speak to the Queen in Greek."

Nothing like it, indeed, had ever before been heard of by any boy; and it had a steadyng effect upon Ford. No more nonsense for him, for the remainder of that term. But it was a severe trial to be forbidden to "run down to the city, and see our folks off for the old country." It was barely possible his father could attend to that small duty, but Ford had his doubts about it.

"I hope he won't forget any thing," he said to Dab Kinzer. "Do you know, he has left my passage ticket and every thing else in the hands of his law-partner?"

"And if he should die, or run away" —

"Where would I be then? I'd go, though, if I had to swim. I'm glad I know how to swim."

"Yes," growled Dabney: "if the steamer's engine should give out, you could swim ahead and tow her."

Dab was not really envious. He was inclined to sympathize strongly with his friend, and to rejoice over a piece of good fortune which seemed like a page torn from the Arabian Nights, — say from the adventures of Sindbad the Sailor. It was a trial, nevertheless, for he had been wondering what he should do with himself during the out-of-school months of that summer. Frank Harley was provided for, with

an invitation to spend his vacation among the beautiful lakes of Western New York. There was no trouble about Dick Lee. Dabney had planned cruises in "The Swallow" with Ford and Dick, and no end of summer comfort on the south shore of Long Island; but it was all gone now. The breaking-up of the quartet was to be complete. Dab was already aware that the Walters family were to remove to the city; and right in among his other mental disturbances came letters from Samantha and from Jenny, announcing the completion of their respective settlements.

"It's just like a kaleidoscope," grumbled Dabney. "Somebody turns the thing around, and nothing ever looks just the same any more."

Another "settlement" was reached about the same time, by the joint efforts of Dr. Brandegee, Mr. Foster, Mr. Hart, Ham Morris, and Mrs. Kinzer. The boys who were to go to college were all ticketed in advance for the "Bullford University," and everybody knew what that meant. The young man who could afterwards show a diploma of his graduation at Bullford was sure to be a man of mark.

"The fact is," remarked Ford, "next to having made the tour of Europe, it's a kind of title of nobility. I'm glad we're all going to the same place. Tell you what I'll do, Dab: whenever I write my name on a hotel-register, and when I scratch it on

the wall of Westminster Abbey, I'll put down yours too. Nobody'll ever know the difference."

"I mean to do it for myself, some day," said Dabney resolutely. "But I've got to earn the money for it first."

That was precisely what Ford's father had done; but there still remained in the young gentleman's own mind a dim and cloudy idea that he was sending his whole family to Europe, and deserved a certain amount of credit for it.

"Ford," said Dabney, "do you suppose you'll understand English when you get back?"

"I don't know. Maybe not. I do wish Dick Lee could go. It would do him a heap of good to learn the language over again."

The remaining weeks of spring slipped rapidly away; and the first warm days of June brought to Ford the last farewells of his father and mother and sister, with final directions from the former as to how the ocean was to be crossed, and a re-union effected on the other side.

"It's awful, Dabney! There they are, now, out on the wide, wide sea. I do hope they won't be sick more than a day or two."

Dabney turned away with a feeling that he had received a severe and unnecessary shock. He could not, would not, and did not, bring himself to face the idea of Annie Foster suffering from an attack of

seasickness. Angels must necessarily be above that sort of thing ; but he said to Ford,—

“ You’ll have a time of it. I don’t envy you, about noon of the second day out of port.”

“ I shall take plenty of lemons,” said Ford. “ Was I seasick in ‘The Swallow’? And didn’t she pitch and roll ? ”

“ Well, so she did ; but you’ll find a steamer a different sort of thing.”

Dr. Brandegee was by no means ignorant of what was going on, and he kept as sharp an eye upon the quartet as was at all needful.

“ They do not need much watching,” he said to his wife. “ I had a talk with Mr. Fallow about the boxing-match between young Kinzer and Joseph Hart. It may be a good thing for Hart. He will only miss his recitations for a day or two. I must have a talk with Kinzer, nevertheless.”

He had more than one, but somehow the effect of them was not all he could have wished. Dabney would show a spice of temper, here and there ; and he would write for “The Bugle.” It was a great pity he could not have taken a lesson of contentment from Dick Lee. Richard worked hard, learned fast, seemed every way satisfied with everybody, and even did his gardening in a manner to call for the distinct approval of Mrs. Myers. His more favored white friend, on the contrary, seemed absolutely to be get-

ting moody ; and he spent an unreasonable amount of time with his pen, writing and writing and writing, and then throwing all he had written into the now cold and empty stove, and putting a lighted match in with it.

“Dab,” said Ford, one day, “do you mean to be an author ?”

“Author ? One of those fellows who write books for a living ? No sir ! I wouldn’t come down to that !”

He had watched the post-office very carefully of late, and no other eyes had seen him receive his letters. Therefore Ford Foster was in ignorance of the true bitterness of Dab’s remark concerning authors. He had not, at any time, as had Dabney, opened envelope after envelope containing carefully prepared manuscript for which the editors of various periodicals could find no manner of use. It had cost Dabney a nice little sum in postage ; and it had brought back to him only the multiform assurance that yet he did not know how, and must wait a while.

There is an age at which all young fellows decide for themselves that they will not wait. Dabney was not yet seventeen ; but it had come to him, and was likely to stay for some time. It is a very good thing for that age to come early. If it comes later in life, it is apt to make a great deal more of out-and-out mischief.

The post-office did a good deal for Dabney, in those warm summer days when it was so rapidly becoming harder and harder to study to any advantage. Even Samantha found time to write to him again; and Jenny Walters had not been in town three weeks before she remembered to answer a letter she had received in the country. Perhaps it was a relief to her to tell somebody how she found things in the city. She gave him the first really graphic account he had received of the departure of the Foster family, and he came within an ace of showing that letter to Ford.

The one thing Jenny did not report fairly was a remark Annie Foster made to her, on board the steamer, less than an hour before she sailed,—

“Poor Dab Kinzer! How lonely he will be, with all the other boys away!”

“He will have Dick Lee.”

“I hardly think Dick will be enough. Jenny, I mean to write Dabney the very first thing.”

“From England?”

“Yes, and from every place we visit.”

“And I’ll send him a new school-atlas, so he can find them all.”

That was one other thing she afterwards neglected, but she kindly encouraged Annie’s purpose at the time. Nevertheless, that first letter from Europe came to Dab with a great thrill of suddenness, con-

vincing him, as he had never before been convinced, that there was such a country as England.

It did more than that for him. A boy with foreign correspondence on his hands could hardly fail to see his own character in a new light; and Dab found himself once more taking a good degree of care of his personal appearance. Under the joint effect of hot weather and authorship, he had grown a little careless towards the end of that term.

The end was indeed at hand now, and with it came a shadow. Not one member of any of the four families interested in that quartet was to be present at the closing exercises of the Grantley Academy year.

There were good and obvious reasons, so far as three of them were concerned; but Dabney was an astonished and disappointed boy.

"Not even mother? She said she was coming. And Ham! I was all but sure he would come with her. Well, it won't be much of an examination: I don't care."

He did care, and that may have been one reason why he went through his several ordeals on "examination-day" without the quiver of a nerve. He would hardly have done that if the Kinzer family had been well represented in the audience assembled in the Great Room of the academy. Dr. Brandegee was more than satisfied with his success in "prepar-

ing those four young fellows," for he somehow always included Dick Lee when he spoke of them. Dick was certainly much better prepared for something,—if he could but find out what,—than when he came to Grantley; and the other three knew that they were well prepared for Bullford.

"Richard," said the stately principal to him, at the close of that day, "as soon as you can after you get home, you must write to me. I have a good deal to say to you, and there is no opportunity for it just now."

"Thank you, sir : I'll write."

"Good-by, Richard."

He was swept away in the mob of boys, with a great warm spot spreading wider and wider from his heart all over him, and a curious question already forming in his mind,—

"Write to de Doctor? Wot on earth'll I say w'en I do?"

There had been talks to and with Dabney and Frank and Ford, before that; and they all knew that the doctor expected great things of them at Bullford, although Ford felt that too little had been said to him concerning the advantages of foreign travel.

"Dab," said he, on their way back to Mrs. Myers's, "you mustn't let go of me till you see me safely on board ship. I want to do you all the good I can."

There was something of a surprise awaiting them at their boarding-house. It had somehow seemed to them as if their academy year had drawn to a close in weariness, heat, separation, and a tendency to a fit of the blues all around, and they were not to come together again until they should meet at Bullford in the fall. So it was a silent sort of walk across the green; and all the other boys they met were too busy to speak or be spoken to.

The moment they reached the gate, however, Dick Lee remarked, —

“Boys, dar’s company !”

“I don’t care,” said Dab. “Let’s go right up stairs, and pack up.”

They were all to leave Grantley by a very early train, next morning; and, truth to tell, the amount of “packing” now remaining undone was but small. They were in a humor, however, to sit upon their trunks, and wait, if nothing better could be found to do.

“How are you, boys ?”

It was the deep, gruff voice of Deacon Robinson himself; and just behind him, in the parlor-door, were Mrs. Robinson and Bob, and behind them were Mr. and Mrs. Fallow.

“I’ve been ‘tending examination all day. Glad you did so well, ‘specially Dick. Thought we’d come round and say good-by.”

They were glad of it, in spite of themselves ; but he had not told them the whole. Mrs. Myers herself had had a hand in it, for she had asked him and his wife and Bob to stay to tea ; and the minister and his wife had come in, and had been compelled to stay ; and they all felt that she liked those boys, for she and Almira had fairly done their best in the preparation of that "tea." There was not only cake, and cold chicken, and hot biscuit : there was actually ice-cream, manufactured by the one confectioner of Grantley. What more could have been asked for in such a world as this ?

It went right to the hearts of those four boys, and so did the hearty good-will expressed by the grim trustee and the rest. There was positively no fair chance for blues, that evening ; and Bob Robinson made every one of them promise to come and see him some time, and kill some more pigeons.

"Boys," said Ford, once they were up-stairs, after little Mrs. Fallow had enthusiastically kissed them all "good-by, and the Lord be with you!" "I say, if ever two women improved in one year, it's been Mrs. Myers and Almira."

CHAPTER XV.

ONE MORE MYSTERY SOLVED.

THE third day after that farewell tea at Mrs. Myers's, Dab Kinzer stood on the end of a North-river pier, in the great city, gazing gloomily down towards the bay. There was a steamer there,—the only one he could see just then, although the river was as crowded as usual,—and the puffing tug which had towed her out of her dock had been that moment cast loose. Dab could not distinguish any one form upon her busy deck: but he knew there was a boy there, looking back at the pier and at the city; and oh! how he did wish he were at the side of that boy, steaming over to see the wonder and the glory of that Old World, where there had been so much life for so many thousands of years! He felt that somehow there were too many inequalities, and one fellow had more than another, and Ford Foster—No, he would not be mean enough to envy Ford.

It was a good thing that at that very moment the

thought of Dick Lee came to him, for it made him a little ashamed of himself, as he ought to have been ; and just then the steamer was carried out of sight behind other shipping, and he let go of the snubbing-post he had been leaning against, and walked away.

“I must call on Jenny before I leave town. But what on earth do Dr. Cummings and Samantha mean by all their nonsense ? I can’t be looking so very old, all of a sudden.”

Nevertheless, that had been the very thing they had remarked to his face ; and he had not heard his sister say to her husband, —

“Now, Alfred, you must not let out Ham’s secret. You know, he made mother and all of them promise.”

“All right, my dear, I won’t ; and I must say I like Dabney more and more, the more I see of him. I must think over that matter about his friend Dick, before I mention it to him.”

The doctor had been more than cordial in his reception of his young brother-in-law, and Dab had been made to feel himself greatly “at home.” A good home it was too ; a good house, and Mrs. Kinzer herself had seen to it that it was well furnished. Dabney had found his “city hotel” every way as comfortable as Ford Foster had prophesied. Still, both Samantha and her husband had insisted upon it, that he looked years and years older than when

they had last seen him; and Dr. Cummings even told him he should call him "Uncle Dab" if he kept on in that way.

There was worse to come. Dabney had the address of Jenny Walters; but he had closely performed his duty of seeing Ford off for Europe, before calling. Now he was at liberty to attend to other duties, he calculated over again the distance between the house of Dr. Cummings and that of Mr. Walters.

It was not so very great, and there were street-cars to help him, after supper; but Dab already knew enough of the city to understand that he was being borne into a very expensive and aristocratic neighborhood. When at last, following street and number, he halted before a four-story "brown-stone front," and knew it must be the right one, he exclaimed,—

"I declare! He must have made a mint of money! Ham was right."

It was a little bewildering to look for Jenny Walters in a house of that kind; and he was conscious of a growing feeling of constraint, which did not vanish when he found himself seated in so very elegant a front parlor, waiting for "Miss Walters."

"Pictures! What furniture! I declare, a statue! Does she really live here? and does Squire Walters own it all?"

The constraint was hardly lessened when Jenny herself came in, dressed as he had never seen her dressed before; as finely as Annie Foster herself, or even a little more so.

Jenny was very glad to see him, and she told him so; and she talked fast, and about almost every thing, but she failed utterly in her attempt to seem at ease.

Annie Foster would not have failed, for she would not have tried; and Dabney was faintly conscious of making a comparison. Nothing could have been more unfair; and in a minute afterwards he saw it, but it was too late then. Jenny's quick eyes had discovered something wrong, and there was a bit of color on her face. Still she talked; and it did Dabney no good whatever to have her tell him, almost in Samantha's own words,—

“Why, Dabney, you are looking so old! What is the matter with you? I shall have to call you Uncle Dab, if you keep on in this way.”

She even did so; and it annoyed Dabney, even while it helped both him and her to adjust themselves to the newness of the house and furniture.

It was on the end of Jenny's tongue several times to ask if he had heard yet from Annie Foster; but she managed not to ask him, and he never dreamed of telling her.

There was so very much to talk about, that Dab's

call could not well be a short one, but he took no pains to lengthen it ; and towards the end the feeling of constraint crept slowly back again. Dab felt that he was sitting up very straight in his chair ; and, when at last he arose to go, he noticed that Jenny did not ask him to stay any longer. What he did not notice was, that there was a full look about her lips and eyes, and that her voice had a softened and troubled tone in it when she said good-night to him. She even called him "Uncle Dab" again, and made him promise to call and see her whenever he came to the city.

Dabney returned to Samantha's, and went to bed ; but it was only to lie awake, and dream of being at sea in a great steamer.

It was about noon of the following day that he was once more walking down the road from the village to Ham Morris's, having left his baggage to be sent for. It was heavy baggage now,—all the accumulation of a year away from home, and it could wait.

It was a magnificent summer day, the whole country blooming out in a patriotic effort to get ready for the Fourth of July, and Dab thought he had never seen it look so beautiful ; but, for all that, there was a weight upon his spirits.

"I'll write to Dr. Brandegee, and to Ford, and Frank ; and I'll write to Annie Foster. I ought to

have done that before. There's the house. They keep on improving it. How the hedge is growing!"

It was a very different-looking place from what it had been when the widow Kinzer first put her improving hand upon it. Even the gate was new; and it opened and let Dab in, and shut behind him, in a way that said,—

"I know my business: I'm the right kind of a gate."

Right on into the house walked Dabney, but not far without meeting somebody.

First it was Pamela, and then Keziah, and then his mother: and every one of them hugged and kissed him tremendously; but each in turn remarked upon his apparent age, and he could see that they kept back something they wanted to say.

"Come right up-stairs, Dabney," said his mother. "You must see Miranda. She's not well enough yet to come down, and she'll want to see you at once."

"Has Miranda been sick? And you did not let me know!"

"Come right along, Dabney." He was coming: for she had led the way briskly, and Keziah and Pamela followed; and Dab knew by their faces that nothing very terrible had happened.

Just as he reached the head of the stairs, and was following his mother towards Miranda's room, there came from the latter a sudden burst of such music

as he had never listened to in that house,—no, nor in the old one. Dab sprang forward.

“A baby?”

Laughter and chuckling behind him; laughter ahead of him; Miranda’s voice talking motherly nonsense to something; and in a few seconds more a great, blue-eyed dumpling of a young Morris was in Dabney’s own hands. Then a heavier and broader pair than his own were laid upon his shoulders, and the deep voice of Ham remarked,—

“How are you, Uncle Dab?”

“Be careful of the baby,” exclaimed Miranda: “Ham, you’ll make him drop it.”

Drop it?—drop that baby?

Dabney would sooner have dropped the moon itself, if it had been given him to hold; but the wonder of it all completely overcame him.

Meantime the voices around him seemed to echo Ham Morris, until Dab himself woke up a little, and said,—

“Aunt Keziah, will you or Aunt Pamela hand this fellow over to his grandmother?—Ham, is there any book that teaches a fellow how to be an uncle?”

Great was the fun they had over the baby and over Dab’s surprise; and they told him how anxious Ham had been to have the secret kept, and how they had feared that Samantha or Jenny Walters or Dr. Cummings, or somebody else, would let it out.

Even Glorianna Lee had been forbidden to write to Dick about it, and so the baby had been kept till Dab came home.

“There’s no mistake about it,” he said to his mother: “I’m getting on in life. I’ll get used to it after a while, but it’s the first uncle I ever was.”

The baby was quite a help to him in several ways; for not only could he now better understand some of his city experiences, but he had something special to speak of in the several letters the writing of which was before him. He even felt that Ford Foster was not so far ahead of him, after all.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FIRST SHIPWRECK.

FRANK HARLEY'S summer-time had fallen unto him in pleasant places. All he had to do was to make himself as comfortable as was possible to a young fellow so far away from those he loved best. He was getting a little used to that, but he found himself less and less inclined to show off in Hindu before company. His tastes were all of a quiet kind, and he was sure of becoming a sort of social favorite. It was the easiest thing in the world for good people to do what they could to spoil a well-behaved, handsome boy of nearly seventeen, whose father and mother were both missionaries, and who, they all felt sure, would one day himself be one of the salt of the earth. Frank was fond of boating and fishing, nevertheless; and he found plenty of both among the beautiful lakes of Central New York. He was in for a quiet summer, only now and then disturbed by visions of college life at Buliford and by the let-

ters he received from his boy friends and his distant home.

Even Dick Lee wrote to him ; but Dick made no attempt to cloak the difficulties under which he labored on his return to the village and the sea-shore.

His mother had seen to it that her garden was worthy of the intelligent, highly educated toil of such a gardener.

“He’s moah like Abel dan he is like Adam,” she said to old Bill, “an’ dar ain’t a thistle in de patch.”

For all that, Dick found himself sweating more than a little, in his efforts to justify Glorianna’s expectations of what that garden ought to do, with him to help it. He would not have let her see a weed in one of those beds for something ; but at the close of the second day he was compelled to remark to himself,—

“It just won’t do for me to think of that letter to Dr. Brandegee, w’ile I’m in among de beets. I’s pulled up half a peck of ‘em like as if dey was weeds.”

Glorianna made “greens” of them, but she looked at Dick almost doubtfully when he brought them in.

All that time, Ford Foster, with a large ocean-steamer under him, was pushing farther and farther away from the land which Columbus or somebody else had discovered for him, and nearer and nearer

and nearer to those countries whereof Americans form their clearest opinion from the fact that so large a part of their populations make haste to get away from them.

“Nobody wants to live there if he can help it,” said Ford to himself, in debating the matter; “but I suppose there is no doubt but what they are worth looking at.”

Dab’s prediction about seasickness came very near to being a false prophecy. Ford was only miserable one day, and made out to conceal a good deal of it from everybody but himself. After that he felt that he had a perfect right to look down upon every unhappy-looking person he met. If there was anybody on board that steamer whom he did not meet, sooner or later, that individual must have been stowed away in the lower hold.

“I knew all about a ship before I started,” said Ford, to a young-lady passenger whose acquaintance he had made; “but I’m learning something all the while.”

“I see,” replied the young lady quietly: “they are not managed now precisely as they were in your day.”

“Exactly,” said Ford; but he at once pointed out a Mother Carey’s chicken over the rail, and the color in his not very weather-beaten face rose a little.

An hour or so later he was leaning over that very rail, and musing,—

"I wonder what the boys are all about. I s'pose Dab's having all sorts of a good time. Hope he'll write to me or Annie as soon as he gets home."

Dabney had already attended to his epistolary duties, but it would be a good while before he wrote any more letters. It had been two or three days before he could bring himself to abandon that wonderful baby altogether to the care of its mother, its grandmother, and its aunts. He had gradually accustomed himself, to a certain degree, to the presence in the house of so entirely new an institution, and he believed Miranda when she said it would one day walk and talk; but the news of its coming had not been broken to him gently, and the surprise was slow in departing.

"Dabney," said Mrs. Kinzer, one morning, "are you not feeling well?"

"Of course I am; but it's all very queer, having so much vacation all at once, and being an uncle. Guess I'll try a row in 'The Jenny.' See if I can't get some blackfish."

"Don't be out too late. It's warm weather for a long row."

And after he had gone she said to Keziah and Pamela,—

"I don't like his looks exactly. He seems heavy and listless. I'm afraid he's been studying too hard."

That was quite possible; but there were other things at work in Dab Kinzer's system, and he was annoyed, when he took his oars, to find how very little he felt like rowing.

"Shows that I need it. I must spend days and days on the water. Get my health in good condition for college work. I'll pull across the bay."

In the old times, before he went to Grantley, he had not thought that so very long a pull; but when at last he reached a spot, under the lee of the long sand-island, where there was a tradition of perpetual luck in the capture of blackfish, he found himself very glad indeed to throw over the little grapnel of "The Jenny" and wait for a bite. When that came to him, moreover, he had little heart about pulling in his fish. He baited, and threw out again: and he tried to sit and think of the boys, and Annie Foster, and days at Grantley, and all sorts of things; but his mind worked sluggishly.

"It's a very warm day. I won't try the home pull till it cools off a little."

He had much better have done so, in spite of the heat; for when at last, with more blackfish in the bottom of the boat than he had at all cared to catch, he pulled up his anchor, and put out his oars, the summer sunshine was gone. Not that it was so very hot, but that the heavens above him were darkening with one of those swift storms which drift northward

along the line of the Gulf Stream, and strike sudden blows at the coast in July and August.

“Rough weather coming, and it’s hardly any cooler either.”

There was not much wind as yet; but Dabney knew there would soon be plenty of it.

“All my own way too. Make it easier for me.”

He should not have been too sure of that, considering how much wind was coming, and how quickly it would stir up the waters of the Bay; considering also that his own arms, for the management of “The Jenny,” were hardly in their customary strength that day.

It came, the wind; and the sky grew black with the dense wings of the tempest, and the waves grew boisterous rapidly. They did indeed drive him homeward, and it was very well they were not against him; but he had never before found the handling of a rowboat so hard a task. “The Jenny” yawed and pitched, and the water tossed her about remarkably; until, at an unguarded moment, a strong cross-wave caught her on the starboard bow as she came up out of a trough, and Dabney’s larboard oar missed its stroke. That was enough, as all boatmen know, for his weight went with the roll; and in an instant more he was floundering in the billows, with “The Jenny” upside down beside him.

“There is no earthly hope of my ever getting ashore.”

That was his first thought ; but, even while his heart sank within him, his whole frame kindled with a strange and unexpected strength. He felt as if he could swim for miles and miles ; and when he should get home he would only tell his mother he had tipped over, and lost his fish, and got himself a little wet.

“Lost my rod, too, and the oars, and the grapnel. Wonder if I can’t tow ‘The Jenny’ in.”

He could try it, and he knew the storm was sweeping her on towards the main shore.

“Drift me in among the rushes. I don’t care. I could wade any distance through them. It’ll be high tide, too, and I’ll be carried well in.”

It was growing darker very fast, or else Dabney did not have a correct idea of how long he had been tugging away in such a frenzied fashion at that boat, and still there was no sign of any shore line.

How should there be through all that driving mist and pouring rain ? And yet, on the crest of every wave, he strained his hot eyes landward.

“Do you really mean to say I’ve got to be drowned out here all alone ? What will mother say, and the girls, and Ham, and — and all the rest of them ?”

He was not aware of the least sensation of fear ; but in a few moments more something like a shout burst from him, —

“Swim ? I can swim all night.”

His voice cleft through the tempest, shrill and clear for that of one who had been so long in the water, and it was not uttered for nothing.

“Father!” suddenly exclaimed another voice out in the gloom, “father, that was Cap’n Dab! Find him. He’s been upsot!”

“Golly!” was all old Bill Lee could find heart to utter, but there was strong pulling done in the next few seconds.

“He jest sha’n’t drown! Back water! I’s got ‘im! Kin you help yourself in, Dab? De water’s powerful rough.”

Dick’s hold was a strong one, and Dabney could still help himself a very little, but all the remaining strength went out of him in that last effort.

“Take your oar, Dick,” said Bill. “Dar ain’t no fool ob a job afore us. Pull yer lebel best.”

“The Jenny” was sure to drift in, and be found some day; but Dick Lee and his father did indeed have to pull their best before they reached the mouth of the inlet.

“Dab! how is you now?”

Dick had asked that question more than once; but no answer had been given, and none came now.

“Pull right in, Dick. Don’t you was’e a minute a-foolin’. We mus’ git ‘im home.”

The smooth water of the inlet was quickly threaded; and there were strong arms to be had for the calling, at the landing.

"It ain't no drownin'," explained old Bill. "He's jist 'sensible. Dat's all. W'en he comes to, de doctor'll know wot's de matter."

"Oh, oh, oh!" groaned poor Dick. "De best feller 'long shore!"

There was great tribulation at the Morris and Kinzer homestead, when those three strong men so carefully bore in the seemingly lifeless body of Dabney. There had been no one to send ahead with the news, and the whole household had already been in some anxiety about him. Even his mother had taken her knitting to the front parlor window an hour before, and Ham Morris had twice walked uneasily up and down the dining-room.

He took but one look at Dabney when his bearers laid him on the sofa.

"Mother Kinzer, do the best you can, right away. I'm going for the doctor."

The man of medicine was not long in coming; but, at the end of a careful examination, he shook his head.

"I should have been called in before; yesterday, at least. As it is, with this dreadful exposure in addition"—

"Why, doctor," said Mrs. Kinzer, "is there any thing worse than the exposure?"

"That is the least of it. I only wish I knew how long he had been in the water."

Dabney himself could not have told that. No, nor at any subsequent time; but the village doctor was so astonished as to be nearly offended, some forty-eight hours later, at being informed by no less an authority than Dr. Alfred Cummings, that Dab's bath had been a good thing for him.

"Soak your next case of typhoid-fever in salt water, then."

"If I could trust my own judgment as to which patient to soak, and precisely at what stage, and how long, I would. I was only speaking about Dab."

There was hardly enough of that one case to found a new school of treatment on; but Dabney required a great deal of such treatment as was already taught in the schools, before he was able to inquire how he got ashore, and what had become of "The Jenny."

There were days and days when the issue hung trembling in a balance, so far as human eyes could see; and now it tipped one way, and now the other. The news of the disaster was at once sent to Samantha, of course, and Dr. Cummings found time to come over with her; and so it happened that Jenny Walters called at their house just before they set out. She expressed a good deal of sympathy; but Samantha's own opinion was that she did not say half as much as she ought. She even said so to Mrs. Kinzer and the girls; and they were, therefore, all the more surprised, two days later, when the new door-

gong rang sharply, and the "help" that answered it came up-stairs to say, —

"It's Miss Walters, mum."

"Jenny?" exclaimed Keziah. "She hasn't visited the village before since they moved to the city."

She had not now come upon any ceremonious errand; for her first words were, when Keziah and Pamela entered the parlor, —

"How is Dabney? Tell me, is he dangerously ill?"

They told her all about it.

"He's delirious half the time," said Pamela. "He would not know you."

"Why! would you let me see him? I'd like to."

That was just like Jenny, and they liked her for it better than ever; and Pamela led the way up-stairs at once to where Mrs. Kinzer was keeping her patient watch by the bedside of her son. She was not alone; for at the foot of the bed sat Richard Lee, with a vigilant expression on his sober black face, as if he did not intend to let a fly alight on the coverlet before him.

Dick had, from the first, asserted his belief that Dab would recover; and Glorianna, when she herself came to the house, had very positively laid down her doctrine: —

"Now, Miss Kinzer, ef de Lord didn't allow to sabe 'im, do you s'pose he'd ha' fotched de ole man

an' Dick along dar at jes' de right time? Sho! ob course he'll git well."

It was not easy to keep Dick away from the Kinzer house, however, garden or no garden, and there he was now; and there, too, was poor Dabney, looking very differently from the hale and bright young fellow he had been when Jenny had last seen him. He was awake; and his eyes were wandering around the room uneasily, as if looking for something. That was an unfavorable symptom.

"Dabney," exclaimed Jenny, stepping forward, "don't you know me?"

"Ease her, Dick," muttered poor Dabney. "That's the steamer. Can't you see her? H'm, too much fog."

"I'm Jenny Walters."

"Yes, that's my boat. Can't upset her. Pulls hard, sometimes, if you don't know how.—Mother, where's Dick?"

"Here I is, Dab, all de w'ile."

"That so? Dick, did you know we'd found another baby?"

"Girls," said Mrs. Kinzer, "you must all leave the room. It excites him to have so many here. Glad to see you, Jenny: it was kind of you to come and see Dabney."

"I do so hope he will get well!"

"Dr. Cummings will be here again to-night: he's

to bring another doctor with him. There'll be three of them."

"Oh dear me!"

"We will know then."

There was a fathomless depth of trembling pathos in those last words of the widow; but she turned again towards her boy, and his sisters hurried Jenny out of the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK TO LIFE AND WORK.

WHEN Jenny Walters returned to the elegant home in the city, for which her father had speculated so long and so successfully, she had reports to make of at least twenty calls made by her among their former neighbors.

“I’m glad you’ve attended to it, Jenny, and got it off your hands,” remarked her father. “It was a thing that had to be done, and you won’t have it to do over again. They’ll none of ‘em call here more than once.”

“Most on ‘em never’ll think of doin’ on it once,” said Mrs. Walters, with unusual shrewdness for her.

“Well,” said her husband, “I don’t so much mind people like the Morrises and Kinzers: they’re plain, good sort of people; but they’ve got some property, and there’s good blood in ‘em. Besides, their city friends are all right. They tell me the Fosters go in

the best circles. We must keep track of them, when they get back from their tour in Europe."

"Is Dr. Cummings much of a doctor?" asked Mrs. Walters.

"Well, I can't say. There's just heaps of doctors, and they're mostly poor as church-mice."

"I can tell you one thing," said Jenny with a flushed face: "he owns his house, and the Kinzers think there is nobody like him."

"Widder Kinzer's just the woman to know what's what," said her mother; but after that there came a long silence, during which Jenny planned a very speedy visit to Mrs. Cummings, to learn the latest news from Dabney.

What that would be, was settled within five minutes of the arrival of the three physicians at his bedside that evening.

His delirium had left him, at least for a while; and he lay very still, as if the motive power had also gone.

"What do you think?" asked Dr. Cummings in a low voice; and his gray-haired colleague from the city responded curtly,—

"He will do."

"Feel safe about him?"

"Splendid constitution. Organism all sound. Good nursing. Crisis past. May do him good."

The village doctor looked very solemn, but he nodded his head.

"Keziah," eagerly whispered Pamela, "I heard 'em! They say he is going to get well."

Mrs. Kinzer had also heard; but she was just then leaning forward and listening for any thing else they might say, and with a plethora of questions about diet and nursing fighting for their first turn in the neighborhood of her tongue.

Dick Lee, at the foot of the bed, was trying hard to sit still and keep himself from shouting,—

"You's all right, Dab! I'll send word to de boys."

That was what he did too; and Frank Harley among his lakes, and Ford Foster among his foreign experiences, received their first news of Dab's disaster from the pen of Mr. Richard Lee.

That watch of his at his friend's bedside was an important thing for Dick. It was there Dr. Cummings made up his mind about him; and it was only a fortnight later, just when Dabney really began to enjoy his custards, and was asking his mother how soon the doctor would let him eat some clams, that Glorianna was called upon for the second great sacrifice her too-promising son had caused her.

"Wot? My Dick to go to de city for to be a doctor? An' leab me an' de ole man to 'tend de gard'n? I knowed it! Dat's wot comes ob de 'cad'my. I'd neber ort to ha' let 'im go. Eberybody wants to take dat boy 'way from his mudder."

It was hard, and no denying it; but her very

fingers tingled with the pride she felt, and the struggle was a brief one.

"Sho! de boy! He ain't goin' to be no clam-digger, he ain't. I jes' do hope I'll lib to see 'im a-drivin' roun' de country wid a hoss an' a bag o' med'cin'. You's a-goin', Dick. Wot do you t'ink of de lates' sympoms wid young Mr. Kinzer?"

Glorianna's imagination was somewhat liberal in its interpretation of the offer made to Dick by Dr. Cummings; for what that gentleman really wanted was an intelligent and thoroughly trustworthy "office-boy," a personage, as all physicians know, scarce and hard to find; and he did but dimly appreciate the purpose in Dick's own mind that the wages he should earn were but as nothing to the knowledge he would gain.

Still it was a good thing for Dick Lee, and it gave his father and mother a great lift in the social scale. None of Glorianna's neighbors, after that, dared speak of "dat ar' fool notion of hern, sendin' her boy to a 'cad'my."

It was altogether too plain that the investment had been a paying one, and that Dick Lee educated was worth higher wages than Dick Lee ignorant. Any clam-digger could comprehend that.

"The Jenny," stripped of all loose furniture, drifted about the bay, after her bad behavior with Dabney, for days and days; and it was old Peter, "the wrecker," who at last brought her in.

“Peter,” said Ham, “what’s the salvage?”

“For bringin’ in that boat? I ain’t no pork, Mr. Morris. I don’t do no wreckin’ among our own folks. I say, is Dab goin’ to git well?”

“The doctors say he is.”

“Well, jest you tell widder Kinzer for me, I’d ha’ thought she had more sense’n to let a boy like that go a-fishin’ with a fever onto him.”

“She didn’t know” —

“I’d ha’ knowed. I’ve hed my eyes about me, tryin’ ef I could sight his boat, ever sence, and I’m glad to fetch it in for him.”

There was a right side to old Peter, after all; and it was quite likely there were few men along shore who would have touched a reward for bringing home “The Jenny.”

Dabney was fairly flooded with invitations to “go jist one tide with me,” when at last he was able to creep down to the landing, and look down the inlet towards the bay.

The rest of his vacation was mainly employed in getting his health to rights, and he fully vindicated the opinion of the medical men. Whether or not he had been “growing too fast,” as some of his mother’s friends suggested, he seemed to take a new departure from the best end of that fever. His muscles recovered their size and tone, his eyes became as bright as ever; and one day, when he went over to

the city to visit Samantha and her husband, and see how Dick was getting along, he made another call on Jenny Walters.

She was very glad to see him, and she showed it plainly enough ; but she said to him,—

“I called at your house when I was over in the village some weeks ago ; but the girls told me you were too sick to see me.”

“Yes,” said Dabney : “I went out on the bay, fishing, and I got wet.”

“Dab,” exclaimed Jenny, “it is wonderful ! I’ve thought and thought about it.”

“About what, Jenny ?”

“Why, your going out on the bay, when you should have been in bed ; and the storm coming so suddenly ; and your boat upsetting ; and then Dick Lee and his father coming along exactly at the right moment. It is wonderful.”

“Now, Jenny, I’ve been thinking about it too, and I’ve made up my mind.”

“What have you made it up to ?”

“Why, it’s always so. It’s never any thing else. There couldn’t quite so many accidents have followed right along. Somebody was thinking about it, and looking out for me. That’s all.”

“Do you think the girls are coming over to see Samantha before long ?” asked Jenny ; and Dab let her change the subject, for he did not feel quite

equal to a discussion of it, although he had not been so dull and piggish as to refuse to see the truth concerning his remarkable adventure.

His sisters had told him of Jenny's visit, and her going to see him in his room, and how she had tried not to cry after she went down to the parlor; and he did not much care how many "airs" she might put on now. Even the elegance of her father's house and furniture had less of a depressing effect upon him than formerly, and he made his call a long one. As for Jenny, she became so far mistress of the situation as actually to ask him, "Dabney, when did you hear from Annie Foster? She told me she meant to write you."

"Oh! it's a good while. I'm looking for a letter every steamer. Ford says they are having a splendid time."

That was but a moderate way of rendering Ford Foster's account of his European tour, and Annie's had fully sustained him. Mr. Foster himself was the very man to see to it that none of the practical advantages of such a journey should be thrown away. His son had been compelled to say of him, in a burst of admiration,—

"He thinks of every thing, Annie. He's cross-examined every man we've met, except that fat English lord that was deaf and dumb. He'd have made him open his mouth if there'd been time. Best of

it is, not an oyster of 'em knows he's going to be opened till he is."

Ford was making preparations for college of a kind he had hardly calculated upon, even after the trip began. He had brought a Greek grammar with him, and he knew he had it yet, — down there somewhere, under all the other things, at the bottom of his trunk ; but he had not opened that forlorn book once, up to the very day when he stood at his mother's side, on the deck of the steamer which brought them home, and pointed out to her the distant glimmering lights which told them how nearly they were again approaching the American shore.

"The only country in the world," remarked his father at the moment, "that an intelligent man would care to live in, if he had his choice."

"Father," replied Ford, "isn't it a good thing that the greater part of them haven't any choice?"

"No, my son, it isn't. Think of what Europe would be to-day, if it were not for what we have done for them already."

"And they don't know it," said Ford.

"Of course not. They do not believe it, even when we tell them ; and it is just as well."

Annie and her mother were at that moment too thoroughly absorbed in watching the light-houses, and thinking of the invisible land under them, to take any interest in the "immigration

can mission" question ; and at last Ford drew a very long breath, and remarked,—

"Now for it. I've got to get the boys together, and then for a high old time at Bullford."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE QUARTET WAS HAZED.

“Boys,” said Ford Foster to his two friends, about three weeks after he landed in his own country, “are either of you pledged yet?”

They were sitting in a large chamber, which might have been a bedroom, for it contained one narrow bed; and which might have been a “study,” for it contained three distinct sets of bookshelves, well laden, and about as miscellaneous a collection of other material as was ever gathered by one knot of freshmen. There were two smaller rooms opening into it, one on each side; but the bed in the big room was Dab Kinzer’s, and helped to give him due recognition as captain of that squad.

Ford repeated his solemn question, —

“Are you pledged?”

“I’m not,” said Dab Kinzer. “Those Aleph-Beth fellows wanted me to eat some more oysters this afternoon; but the cook they go to don’t know how to make a stew — can’t fry, either.”

“Don’t eat with them,” said Ford emphatically. “I’m beginning to believe that all the learning and magnanimity of this institution is locked up in the Gimel-Daleths.”

“I don’t know,” remarked Frank Harley thoughtfully: “those Vau-Zain fellows put in a claim for about all there is.”

“So do the Cheth-Jods,” said Dabney; “and there were three of the Caph-Lamed boys around on the campus, waiting for me, when I came out from Latin. They look a little queer to me.”

“I suppose we’ve got to join one or the other of ‘em, sooner or later,” said Ford, with such an expression of face as a prime-minister might wear in admitting the imminence of a foreign war. “We’ve held off first-rate, but our time will come. Only we must all go together.”

“Glad we went into the gymnasium at once,” exclaimed Frank. “Guess we can stand their initiation.”

“Initiation,” scornfully replied Ford. “That’s nothing. I tell you what, though, there was a fellow hazed, last night, in this very building. They’ve been all round now, and not a soul has peeped.”

“Our turn coming?” asked Frank.

“Guess so. The faculty think it doesn’t go on, ‘cause they don’t hear about it. Soon as it’s known which one of these Hebrew things we’ve joined, all the rest’ll be free to go for us.”

"I'll tell you what, then," said Dab: "I move we draw cuts for a secret society, and then they can just haze. I'm ready. There's my base-ball club in the corner."

"Dabney," said Ford, "you are a man after my own heart. Pity Dick Lee isn't here with a hoe. Four is a better number to haze than three."

"Three will do: shall we put 'em all in the hat?"

"Every letter of 'em: I'll write out the tickets. I know more Hebrew than the rest of you,—studied it while I was in Europe."

It was a sort of culmination—that evening. The quartet had found itself only a trio on its arrival at Bullford, but, for some reason, an unexpectedly popular one. It may have been that there were many secret societies, and a short crop of available freshmen, or it may have been no more than the ordinary way of things at Bullford; but an astonishing amount of sophomorical attention had been lavished upon those three boys.

"The examinations were nothing to it," said Frank Harley.

"They were nothing, anyhow," was Ford Foster's contemptuous response to that. "Why, they did not even pose me on Greek. If a fellow knew the alphabet, he could get in."

He was wrong there. The examining professors of Bullford University knew precisely what they were

about; and they cared very much less for any incidental mistakes made by a nervous candidate for admission, than they did for such evidence as he might give them, that he had been fairly taught the use of his text-books. They would attend to the future themselves, and every one of them had set down Dr. Brandegee's triple work as having been very well done.

A number of slips of paper were duly prepared, each bearing the deeply-mysterious sign of one or other of the secret organisms with which Bullford was honeycombed; and all were tumbled into Ford's hat, and shaken well.

"Dabney," said he, "tie a pillow-case around Frank's head, and let him pick out the fatal one."

A dry towel answered as well, and Frank's hand was guided to the hat.

"I've got one: read it!"

"Aleph-Beth!" shouted Ford. "There is not such another institution on earth, or in Europe either. Every man of them ought to be buried at once in Westminster Abbey. I saw a lot of names there that must have been taken out of a hat. Boys, we are Aleph-Beths."

"Good as any," said Dabney. "Hullo! hear that tramping in the hall."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the door opened, and a very remarkable procession stalked solemnly in, two by two.

Coats turned inside out. Hats knocked in. Curious neckties and collars. Much burnt-cork, a few pairs of false moustaches, and a full supply of green spectacles. Nobody who had acquaintances among that round dozen of Bullford sophomores could have picked out one of them ; and the foremost man's voice was preternaturally hollow and sepulchral, as he marched forward to the table.

“Young men, your hour has come. The ordeal of the pump is before you.”

“Well, yes,” calmly remarked Ford Foster, “but you are hardly my ideal of a pump.—Dab, what are those ragamuffins doing in your room ?”

A groan of astonishment ran back through the ranks, but Dabney himself inquired,—

“Exactly. What are all you loafers doing here ? You can walk right out of this, if you please.”

“We are the agents of King Haze, and we are in the discharge of our solemn duty.—Marshals, seize and bind the rebels !”

The “marshal” whose duty to seize and bind led him nearest to Frank Harley could hardly have been recruited from the gymnasium ; and Dab Kinzer piled a couple more on top of him, at the very moment when Ford was adding the hollow-voiced man to the heap.

“Clubs, boys !” shouted Dabney ; and, before the rest of the mob had recovered from their surprise

sufficiently to make a "rush," they were confronted by three active youngsters, with each a base-ball propeller in his hands. How those clubs did swing, although they were not hitting anybody! and how very inconvenient the whole business of hazing did suddenly become in the eyes of the hazers who saw them swing!

"Surrender!" gasped the hollow-voiced leader, as he regained his feet, with one hand on his nose.

"Get out of my room!" shouted Dab Kinzer, as he made a long step forward.

"Break every bone of them," fiercely added Ford Foster.

Three or four of the hazers, who had been nearest the door, were already outside; and two more followed very promptly.

"Cowards, do you desert me?" frantically inquired the hollow-voiced leader; but the base-ball clubs were swinging nearer and nearer, and he required one hand to keep his handkerchief at his nose. He could do nothing wonderful in the way of tying up freshmen, with only one hand. Yet another and another deserter gave way towards the door; and in half a minute Dab Kinzer was bolting it behind the last of them.

"Wonder if they will try it again," began Ford; but at that moment Dabney shouted through the keyhole, "I shall put a charge into my shotgun

to-morrow. It's the best kind of a hazer. — No, Ford, they won't come."

Two nights after that, in one of the most solemn phases of the Aleph-Beth initiation ceremonial, Ford Foster nudged Frank Harley with his elbow.

"Hear that voice. The fellow that makes the responses."

"Awful hollow" —

"And look at his nose. Nothing hollow about that."

No; but it did look as if he might have been engaged in an unsuccessful attempt at hazing, and had failed to dodge some of the consequences.

Bullford University, like so many other American institutions of the kind, was yet in a formative and development state, feverishly awaiting the demise of those of its wealthier friends from whom heavy legacies were to come; and there was little uniformity in the ways of living which prevailed among its undergraduates. Some had rooms in buildings which properly belonged to the university, but more had not; and the set occupied by the three friends was something betwixt and between. That is, all the rooms in that structure were occupied by students, but the occupants were mainly a law unto themselves after they got there. One curious result was, that the order there preserved was generally very good, with the exception of an occasional sickly effort at

hazing freshmen into a higher degree of respect for sophomores. Meals were taken at various places duly provided in the immediate neighborhood ; and, by the time the college year was a month old, all things had settled down into a regulation movement so quiet and unexciting that Ford Foster was fully justified in remarking,—

“Boys, for educational purposes I approve of this ; but there was a good deal more going on at Grantley.”

“Why,” replied Dabney, “this is only Grantley continued. Just you wait a while, till we get into the ball-clubs and the boating and all that.”

They waited, and there was no other course for them to take ; but, before they had completed that part of their work at Bullford, they made a discovery. They were not at Grantley. They were not at home. They were at Bullford ; and there, and in every other place and space capable of being affected by college laws, it was an axiom that a “freshman” was a being upon whom all other created things were entitled to look down. It was a little difficult for the sophomores who had failed in the hazing business to look down very loftily upon those three ; but freshmen they were, and such they must remain, until the slow wheel of time should turn away around.

“There hasn’t been a thing to worry me yet,”

wrote Dabney to Ham Morris ; "but Ford's had a snub. A package of books came for him the other day ; and, when he opened them, they were nothing but a dingy old set of Blackstone's Commentaries. But that wasn't the worst of it ; for there was a letter with them, and it told Ford, 'a man of ability might possibly read two pages of Blackstone per day. All I will ask of you is one page.' It stirred up Ford, I tell you. He read ten pages, hand running, and then he said to me, 'Dab, you read 'em. See if you could tell father what it's all about, when you get through. It's made me sick.' So I read them for him, but it's harder work than trolling for bluefish."

Ford Foster, at about the same time, wrote to Annie,—

" You may tell father I find Mr. Blackstone very entertaining, but a whole page of him is enough for any one day. I've seen that fellow Dab Kinzer eat five, right along ; but then his digestion is something wonderful. He ate his regular supper after that."

" What !" exclaimed Mr. Foster, when Annie told him, " Dab Kinzer reading Blackstone of his own accord ? Why, what can he make of it ? "

Not much, perhaps, but he had made up his mind to read those books, and he did it ; and before he got through he could read back and understand some of the first chapters, fairly well, for a boy.

CHAPTER XIX.

REACHING HARD SPOTS.

"I KNOW where Old Rocks got his notions about the structure of the earth," said Ford Foster, with a knowing shake of his head, one day when they were all coming out together from a lecture on that subject.

"Why, from his books," said Frank.

"No, nor the books didn't, either: they'd all been to college, Old Rocks, and his books, and all. Just see how we're stratified. Seniors and juniors, and sophomores and freshmen, and society-men, and boating-men, and lots of other strata. Now the fellows that can't afford to buy new hats are trying to stratify. The fellows that have got gold watches and chains, they warped out a little before they'd been here a week."

"That's a fact," said Frank. "There's De Mush and Von Carraway and Winfield Scott Cobb,—they won't speak to another fellow in the class."

"Of course not," said Ford: "they belong to the aristocracy. De Mush's people came over in 'The Mayflower:' and they got ashamed of it, and went back again, and they've been going and coming ever since; so he's half an Englishman and half a first-family Yankee. Von Carraway comes right down from Hendrik Hudson's cook; and he really ought not to speak to common people, like Kinzers and such."

"How about Cobb?" asked Dab.

"Cobb? You ignoramus! His folks have been in the regular army since Columbus didn't land. Both sides. His grandmother was a brigadier; and the only reason he isn't at West Point is because every other grandson she had, that could read, is there already. Of course, he couldn't speak to a civilian, you know."

"The only straps he'll ever wear," growled Dabney, "are the straps of his boots. But if those three ain't careful, there'll be what Old Rocks calls an upheaval of the primitive formations."

It was coming upon those three,—the knowledge that the world above ground is very much like the world below it, and is dreadfully "stratified" with all sorts of fractures and upheavals, but with a very strong adherence to the original plan. They were yet to learn, that even for building-purposes, and much more for other uses, the very oldest strata

require to be thoroughly quarried out and broken up. The best soils are nothing but old rocks pounded fine, and there is a wonderful amount of pounding going forward nowadays.

“Tell you what I’ve heard about De Mush,” remarked Ford. “He isn’t heavy on Greek, but they do say he is the best dancer at Bullford; not a man, even in the senior class, can show a candle to him. That’s the reason he gets invitations.”

“Dance?” said Dabney: “Ford, can you do that?”

“Of course I can. Even Annie’ll dance with me; and—well, if she can’t dance there’s no use.”

Dab was making a mental effort to picture to himself Annie Foster in the act of dancing, when Ford began again,—

“Dab, you’ve been at the Academy of Music: you ought to see a ball there once. Oh, it’s great! Such dancing!”

“What’s the good of it?”

“The good of it? I don’t know. It’s worth doing, if you can get in.”

There was a curious operation going forward in Dab’s mind at that moment. He was trying to reconcile dancing with Blackstone; and it seemed to him as if they had, after all, some mysterious connection, as two impossible things for him, both of which required to be done.

It was only a few days afterwards that his course in mathematics presented him with just such another; that is, an impossible thing, which nevertheless required to be done. He was called to the blackboard with it, and he broke down ignominiously. Every boy in the class, except the Aleph-Beth, grinned sarcastically when he failed to give a good account of his chalked diagram, and walked to his seat in disgrace.

It was a hard experience for Dab; and he wished, for the moment, that he was out on the bay in "The Jenny," with all sorts of a storm coming in from the sea.

The freshmen were not entitled to the immediate tuition of the august professor of mathematics; but the tutor assigned them had been the "best man" of his own day, and was suspected of having discovered a comet. Somehow or other, after the morning's work was over, Dab Kinzer found that tutor very near him, when he started across the campus towards his own room.

• "Kinzer, hold on."

"What is it, Mr. Byerly?"

"Just a word. Let Foster and Harley get ahead of us: I want to say something."

"I know what it is, Mr. Byerly. I've no head for mathematics: I can never master that thing."

"Nonsense! I know what's the matter with you.

You've reached a dull spot: I've had 'em. What are you reading?"

"Blackstone."

"Tip-top. Couldn't do better. He is full of mathematics."

"Haven't seen any yet."

"Of course you haven't; but the truth is just here. Every now and then, when a fellow is ploughing up his brain for the first time, he comes to a place that won't plough easily,—rocky, or swampy, or full of old roots, or maybe it's a hard, wet clay."

"I was brought up on a farm," said Dabney. "I know what you mean. I've seen 'em."

"So was I, and I knew you'd been there. It takes patience, that's all. Best spots in the farm, after you get 'em under. Don't you give it up till there's a crop on this piece."

Dabney looked at the slim, pale-faced tutor, in utter astonishment. Why, here was a part of the soulless Bullford educational machine actually taking a personal interest in him, and talking what sounded like common-sense. His own mother could hardly have been more practical. Said Dab to himself,—

"I understand him; but what's he up to?"

Said he aloud to the tutor,—

"It's all very well, Mr. Byerly; but I broke down to-day."

"So you will again, every time you come to a dull

spot. I wish you would come to my room this evening: I want to talk with you."

"I'll come, thank you. But you can't guess how dull my spot is."

"Yes, I can. Head feels like a chunk of wood, eh?"

"Floodwood. Water-soaked. Won't split, and won't burn."

"That's it. Come and see me."

The pale-faced tutor turned away; and in a moment more Ford Foster was saying to Dab, —

"Did he give it to you heavy? That was the worst smash you've made since we've been here. Makes me think of what I did for Homer—poor old blind beggar!"

Dabney carried his "dull spot" to Mr. Byerly's room that evening; and he came away with a queer idea in his head, that he had been talking with Dr. Brandegee,—that is, with the Grantley principal lowered in stature a full head, and nobody knew how much in weight. The queerest of it all was, that the "dull spot" had vanished, and that he felt equal to that problem, and a dozen more of the same calibre.

"Boys," he said, in response to their anxious inquiries, "if any of the other fellows want to poke some more fun at Byerly, I'm in. Give 'em another kind of a problem, right away. He's a brick."

That was by no means the last of Dab's "dull

spots," or of the help he received from the man who had "had any number of them," and had dug them all up and raised crops on them; and there were further consequences to come thereof, concerning which neither the helper nor the helped had the remotest idea.

It was not a great while after that, that Ford Foster received a letter from his sister Annie, which stirred him up.

"Dab," he inquired, after reading it, "have you told that young woman you are taking dancing-lessons?"

"No, of course I haven't."

"What does she mean, then? She says you are getting ahead of me, and I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"You've been spelling words wrong. If you come to a word you don't know, when you're writing to her, why don't you look at the dictionary?"

"That's the way you do it, is it? I wondered. But then, Dab, I'm not half sure the dictionary is right, a good deal of the time. I haven't much faith in books, anyhow."

Annie's letter was a good thing for Ford, nevertheless. She had brought him to a state of mind regarding herself, before that, which furnished him with a perpetual ideal of perfection,—blended a little with his other idea of his mother,—and a word from her went a very great way.

"Dab is a good fellow, no doubt," he said to himself, "and he works harder than any other man in our class; but he hasn't had many advantages."

That was a fact. Dab had never lived in a boarding-house, nor made himself familiar with the ways of the "best society;" nor had he been to Europe. In fact, there were a great many things which had been denied him; but, for all that, the members of the Aleph-Beth Society, especially the upper-class men, were beginning to say to each other, and even to outsiders,—

"We've got the best man in the senior class, and the best junior; and our sophs are doing well, and we're just sweeping things in the freshmen. That fellow Kinzer hasn't a man behind him that can hope to pass him. He's going in to win, and there's no end of stay in him."

Mr. Byerly himself was an Aleph Beth, but he was rigidly conscientious in the distribution of his good offices. Dabney found out, little by little, that the pale tutor was "reaching out," in his own way, after every man in that class who would let himself be reached. Some would not, or rather they had too much "wood" in them of one kind and another,—mostly very green and unworkable wood. Frank Harley was not one of the unworkables, nor was Ford Foster, and the three friends kept very well together; but Dick Lee said to Ham Morris, just about the end of that first term at Bullford,—

"Jes' you read that letter from Mr. Foster. Cap'n Dab's going to be captain all the while, sure's you live."

There was not a sign of jealousy or meanness in that letter, certainly; and Ham took it home with him to show it to Mrs. Kinzer. Miranda came very near reading it to the baby.

One term followed another; and it was just as the freshman year was drawing to a close that Dabney met his friend the tutor, half way across the campus, one morning. There was a look of special paleness in the face of Mr. Byerly; and it led Dab to say at once,—

"You need a vacation more than any of us. You've worked harder. What do you mean to do with it? Not spend it among your books?"

"Hardly. The doctors tell me I must have some sea-air. I've found a place on the south shore of Long Island Sound"—

"Have you? Why, you can't possibly be far from us. Will you come and have a sail with me? catch fish? swim? dig clams?"

Curiously enough, Mr. Byerly's idea of where Dab came from had been cloudy indeed up to that very moment. The pupils intrusted to him had been only so many minds requiring his aid in their development; and he had not carefully informed himself as to whether the farms and homes they came from

were on the seashore or among the mountains. That, too, although Dab was quite sure he had told him time and again, in ignorance of the fact that the tutor's mind dismissed the factors of each and every problem as soon as he had solved it.

At all events, the particulars of this one were written down for him ; and Dabney comprehended the case sufficiently well to determine that he would himself hunt up Byerly, and make sure he did not forget his promise to take a sail in "The Swallow."

A fortnight later he kept his resolution ; but not till he had filled the minds of Mrs. Kinzer and Ham Morris with a vivid idea of what he owed to the pale tutor in the way of special encouragement and instruction. He came home from his errand in a depressed and sorrowful condition.

"Ham," he said, "where do you think I found him,—and he half sick?"

"Can't guess. Where was it?"

"Stuck away in a hot little room under the roof ; story'n-a-half farmhouse, looking out on a swamp. Mosquitoes boring holes in him. Not a soul to talk to. No feed,—I'll swear to it. He'll die there."

"How far is it?" exclaimed Ham.

"Why, it's only fifteen miles from here, by the road. I went by rail, and had to go forty to get around, and I walked two miles after I got there. How he worked his way into such a hole"—

"Dabney," said Mrs. Kinzer suddenly, "you take the ponies and the light wagon, to-morrow morning, and you bring that man right here. Ham?"

"Of course, mother Kinzer. That's just what I was going to say. If he won't come, Dab, I'll send a couple of the hands with you, and you can fetch him. Tie him up, and bring him right along."

"I'll just make him come. Now, mother, I'm ever so much obliged to you and Ham."

The ponies were on the road at a very early hour next day; and the pale-faced tutor had never had such a surprise in his life as came to him not long after he had finished the dismally small breakfast he had been able to eat.

"I will give you time to pack your trunk, Mr. Byerly."

"Why, I need not take that with me. I'll be back here so soon."

"No, you won't. If my mother once gets hold of you, she'll not let go till you are a different-looking man from what you are now. It would be suicide for you to stay here."

Mr. Byerly had no strength to resist such coercion as his vigorous young friend brought to bear, and the trunk went into the light wagon.

Then what a drive was that, in spite of the mosquitoes! Not so many of them on the whole drive, after all, as they left behind in that remarkable

"summer boarding-place" at the edge of the salt-marsh.

"Seems to me," said Mr. Byerly to Ham Morris at dinner, "I've eaten more than I have before in years."

"Eaten?" said Ham. "Did you say you'd been eating? Have you taken any notice of Dab? If we have you here for a month, we'll make you eat like him. I couldn't promise more than that."

CHAPTER XX.

BIRTHDAYS AND OTHER PRIZES.

THERE were, doubtless, many birthdays that year among the sophomore class of Bullford University ; but there were three which, with one which occurred to Dick Lee in New York, brought the several members of the quartet out of their eighteenth year, into their nineteenth. Dab Kinzer's took place, as usual, just as he was preparing to go home for the winter holidays. It surprised him a little, at the same time, to be made the bearer of so many grateful messages from Mr. Byerly to the good people on the Long-Island shore.

“They would all be glad to see you,” said he in reply ; “but I’d have to introduce you over again. They would hardly know you.”

“I owe it all to them,” was the enthusiastic reply of the tutor. “The care they took of me has given me a new lease of life. Please tell your mother I shall never forget her most motherly tyranny.”

It was simply a fact, that a few weeks of out-and-out sea-shore life, with no end of such good living as Mrs. Kinzer habitually provided for her family, had fully justified the advice Mr. Byerly had received at the end of it all from Dr. Cummings.

“Don’t see your physicians, when you get back to Bullford ; change your landlady. Don’t take any more medicine : take a boat, and a pair of dumb-bells, and look out sharp for your appetite.”

“Seems to me,” the tutor replied, “I never had any before this.”

He managed to keep it, all the rest of that year ; and the effect upon him was marvellous. He even had strength enough about Christmas, after a brief visit to his own relatives, to make a trip to the great city ; and, once he was there, it was only a matter of a few hours, to run over and express in person his gratitude to the hospitable people who had forced him to be reasonable, and have a good time, the previous summer.

He did not happen to meet his pupil during that visit ; for Dab was spending the day with his sister Samantha. Dab had some calls to make also, so that he would not be home again until the morrow.

It was at a late hour that evening that he made his re-appearance at the house of Dr. Cummings, and he was expected to give an account of himself.

“Do you know,” he said to his sister, “Ford is

actually beginning to get invitations, and go out into society? He's no older than I am."

"And isn't Annie splendid?"

"So she is. I never saw anybody else just like her."

"But, Dab," said Samantha, "did you notice how Jenny Walters is growing?"

"She is a little taller."

"Taller! Why, she isn't the same girl. And she's going to be one of the handsomest young ladies! She speaks French now, and she's wonderfully improved in her music."

"Wonder if she can box," dryly remarked Dabney. "It's about the only thing she doesn't know, so far as I can find out."

Jenny herself had noticed a good many changes in her old playfellow, and she hardly knew what to make of some of them.

He did not talk so much more than formerly, and he seemed as frank and open as ever; but there was something of the sophomore about him, after all. No fellow ever got through college without an attack of that. Dabney had caught it, as naturally as Miranda's baby afterwards took his measles.

Ford's case was more severe, as well as protracted; and Frank Harley had it twice. That is, he took a fit of priggishness before he ceased to be a freshman, and it broke out again, dreadfully, after the

course of time carried him into his second year at Bullford.

It helped him a good deal to have the "sophomore prize declamation" honors carried away from all three of them by "that empty-headed coxcomb, De Mush." Nobody in the class, in fact, had counted on that; and the worst of it all was, that De Mush took it as a matter of course, and pretended to think very little of it.

Somebody heard him remark to Van Carraway, —
"The prize, what is it? Don't know, 'pon honor. It's the correct thing for us fellows to take a prize now and then. That's all I did it for. I s'pose we ought to leave the next one to the mob."

Not a man of them all knew how the young scion of "aristocracy" had practised and toiled and hoped for the one "honor" which his peculiar methods of study and recitation had left within his reach.

As Ford Foster explained it, —

"There wasn't another thing on the whole list that he could capture with his mouth. Dabney, my boy, you didn't go off very well."

"How about you?"

"Me? Let me see. Did I try for that prize? Did Frank? Don't remind us of it, please. I'm glad little De Mush has won something at last. If he can't pass his junior examination, he will have something to carry home."

Dabney had brought back to Bullford with him one important consequence of his call upon Ford's family.

Mr. Foster himself walked into the parlor before Dab came away; and, among other questions, he asked him,—

“Ford says he has finished his Blackstone. What have you been doing?”

“Read him through. That's about all I can say.”

“Well, that's a good deal. I've given Ford a copy of Kent's Commentaries for his next course of light reading. I want him to finish them before he is a senior.”

That fact was afterwards described to Dabney by his room-mate, as “about the biggest blister. Just look at 'em, will you! And I haven't had a case to try since I came here.”

“We've got it to do,” replied Dabney. “I told your father I'd do it.”

“Did you? Couldn't we finish 'em this week, Dab? There's the soph Greek prize to go for, and you and I and Frank stand as good a chance for it as anybody.”

“Well, Frank, now. He may win it. He's got the start of us on languages.”

“Got it among the Teloogoos. I say, Frank, is Hindu really any thing like Greek?”

“Not that I can see. But there's something in

not having been tied down to one tongue when you were small."

That was pretty near it; and the consequences were working out in Frank's Greek and Latin at a rate which made the Aleph Beths proud of him. They even went so far as to say,—

"We can bet on Kinzer for a general average; but, when you come to languages, give us the man from Asia."

The man from Asia was a reasonably hard worker too; and, when at last the Greek prizes were announced, not one of them went to De Mush and his friends.

"I've really no use for Greek," was the comment of Mr. Winfield Scott Cobb. "It's never heard of in the army. I'm getting well on with my Spanish. They speak that at the forts a great deal."

"Prizes?" added Van Carraway. "Ah, yes! I heard about them. Didn't a young man in our class by the name of Harley get one,—the first?"

"Yes," said De Mush; "and that long-legged Kinzer boy got the second, and a fellow named Foster got the third. They're all in the class. I've seen them at recitation. Foster's people ain't so very bad, either. I heard of them when I was at my uncle's during the holidays."

"Old family? Name's a good one, if they are the right line. Any funds in the crowd?" asked Van Carraway.

"Don't know," said De Mush. "Things are awfully mixed nowadays. The world's going to the dogs, and the old families are dying out."

The representatives of three more or less ancient stocks then and there determined not to be killed prematurely by overworking of their royal brains for any more prizes: but it gradually leaked out that De Mush had obtained a glimpse of Annie Foster at an evening party to which his New York uncle had taken him, and that an impression had been made upon him of so deep a nature that he was building up a purpose of "speaking to that Foster fellow."

The Aleph Beths were wild with delight over their triumph. Never before in the history of Bullford had all three of the Greek prizes fallen to one secret society, and the humiliation of all the rival organisms was intense.

The news of it reached Long Island by several channels. Annie Foster sent a congratulatory note to Mrs. Dr. Cummings. Dab wrote to his mother, and Dick Lee sent a triumphant account of it to his own.

"I's glad ob it," said Glorianna to Mrs. Kinzer a day or two afterwards. "It's jes' a pity Dick wasn't dar."

"There were no other prizes to be won this time," said the widow.

"Den I's glad he wasn't dar, so de oder boys had a chance."

Dick was doing well enough for himself, in the discharge of his duties at the office of Dr. Cummings. The doctor was entirely satisfied with him; and it was not many months after Dick's entry before Samantha told her sisters, —

“Do you know, Alfred says Dick can put his mannikin together?”

“That awful thing that shows how a body is made?” said Keziah, with a shudder.

“It's one of the most beautiful mannikins in this country,” exclaimed Samantha. “I wouldn't dare to touch it, but Dick has found out just where the pieces go.”

He had been more afraid of that thing than was Keziah Kinzer herself, the first time he saw it taken apart; but he had studied it day and night, and dreamed of it, and read a whole book of anatomy clean through; and then he went home on a visit, and alarmed and delighted his poor mother by giving her a graphic description of the way she herself was put together.

“Is yer fader all jes' like dat? and Miss Kinzer, and all de res' ob de worl'?”

“On'y I dasn't pull it to pieces,” said Dick, “any more'n I would you, or one of them.”

“Do you hear dat, Bill? Who was it sent dat ar' boy to de cad'my?”

Old Bill was sitting in the corner at that moment, pressing both hands upon his stomach.

“Don’t say no more ‘bout it jes’ now, Glorianny. I isn’t altogedder ready to be cut up; but I’s got a drefful queer sort ob feelin’ in bofe sides.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SEA AND LAND FORCES.

DABNEY KINZER's brains must have been in a state of growth during the latter part of his sophomore year; for the "dull spots" were of frequent occurrence. Now they turned up in one direction, and now in another; and sometimes the very things he knew best were under the heaviest kind of a fog. He went to see tutor Byerly till he was fairly ashamed to go any more, and fought his difficulties through all by himself. It was the better way for him, since he was the more thoroughly taught that they were sure to yield if he stuck to them long enough. It was the old story over again, of Jacob and his angel. Every wrestling-match in which he refused to give up left him stronger and better prepared for the next one which might come. There was always sure to be another close at hand.

He was now a member of the university boat-club, and in a fair way to be an oar-holder in the

next year's "regatta," if he would give his consent to be named. Somehow or other, however, his interest in rowing matters was a trifle sluggish, and he had thus far refused to "train." He did not give his boating friends any especial reason, and even the upper-class men of the Aleph Beths did not know how desperately their best soph was sticking to his books. A good deal of it was the work of tutor Byerly, who had managed to find out that Dab had added Kent's Commentaries to his list of studies, and had been a little troubled by it.

"If you mean to be a lawyer," he argued, "there'll be time enough for all that when you get into the law-school."

"Mr. Foster doesn't seem to think so. He says the best law a man ever knows is that which soaks into him before he understands it."

"He ought to know. I see his name among the counsel in great cases, every now and then. But don't you let Kent interfere with your mathematics. They will come upon you thick and heavy in your junior year."

Dabney promised; but the fact was, he had come to a "dull spot" in the hard, close reasoning called for by the old chancellor's work, and he was wrestling with it. It lasted him to the end of his term; and he went home with a fresh piece of information worrying his conscience. There was a weak man in

the university crew for the great regatta, and he had half a doubt if he ought not to have been in that man's place.

"We'll be whipped, sure, if he gives out," said he to Ford and Frank. "I could beat him, and not half try, training or no training."

"If we're beaten, we're beaten," said Ford sententiously; "and there's good ground for hoping there may be a slim backbone in some of the other crews. We can hardly come out at the bottom of the heap."

That was precisely what the Bullford boat did, nevertheless. Or, rather, it wound up that great race at the rear of the line, with its weakest member an object of commiseration for all who knew him. It was not so bad merely to have lost the race; somebody had to win it, and the rest had to lose it: but then, to be the tail!

Dabney's conscience pounded him well, when he read the printed report of that regatta; and he determined to give "*The Jenny*" plenty of work during that summer.

Frank Harley had gone away up north again, to his old acquaintances,—as Ford said, "to see how the arctic regions looked when there was sunshine on the ice;" but Ford himself came over to see Dabney, a week or two afterwards, with a whole budget of news.

Dab was already aware that the summer-hotel people had invaded the sandy solitude of the long-bodied island across the bay; and his sisters had written him glowing accounts of the reported splendors of the "Blazing Beach House;" but he was not prepared for Ford's news, for all that.

"What do you think, Dab? Our folks are going to spend a fortnight or more there, before they go to the Adirondacks. I went over with them to see them safely lodged, and I might about as well have gone back to Bullford."

"Why, do the guests attend regular recitations?"

"Could if they wanted to. Old Rocks is there, and so is Ultimatum, and there's danger of the president coming. Your friend Byerly's got a room at the north-west corner of the bay-side; and who should I see on the sea-view piazza but those three spoons?"

"The codfish?"

"Yes: De Mush and Van Carraway and Cobb, large as life, got up fit to kill, and smoking cigarettes. They can do that."

"Well, so can you."

"Not now, I can't: I'm dispirited, Dabney. Come over, and see how they do it. The tavern's going to be a great resort for army men, they say. That accounts for Cobb. But what about De Mush and Van Carraway and the faculty?"

"Ford," said Dabney, "don't go back to-night.

Stay here with me till morning, and I'll take you over in 'The Swallow.'"

"The very thing! There's to be a grand hop to-morrow night. Bring a bag with your evening rig, and you can put a swell on those fellows."

"How's that?"

"Why, don't you see? You are no common humanity: you come to the Blazing Beach House in your own yacht. 'Tisn't everybody can do that,—not even the faculty. It's a big thing, Dab."

Dabney was by no means sorry to have something like an adventure turn up. He had found those first few days at home a little different from any others he had ever spent there. It was all right at the house, and Miranda's baby was worth coming home to see, for the way it was going forward was truly wonderful; but everybody else in the village, and around it, had also undergone some kind of a change. It was queer that so many old people whom he knew should go right by him without recognizing him.

"Pity old age has such an effect upon the memory," said Dabney, at first; but Pamela gave him some light on the subject, a few days later.

"Dabney," said she, "I met old Mrs. Salterbury to-day, and what do you think she asked me? Why, she wanted to know who that tall young man was that sat in our pew in church last Sunday."

"Did you tell her?"

"Of course I did ; and said she, 'Sakes alive ! do tell ! Wall, now, Pamela, don't you think he's kinder thin and peaked ?' And I told her we had brought you home to fatten you up."

Things were changed and changing ; and Samantha had already sent word over that Mr. Walters had suddenly determined to go to Europe, with his whole family. There would hardly be time for Dabney to call before they went. She should have written before, or else Jenny's father should have given her time to let Dabney know ; for he hastened over to the city to see Dick Lee, and Samantha, and Dr. Cummings, only to find that Mr. Walters's remarkable management of his family affairs had left his mansion in charge of a housekeeper. He and his wife and Jenny were already at sea, and nobody knew when they meant to return.

All this, and a good many other considerations, rendered Ford's proposition especially acceptable ; and Ham Morris contributed the use of "The Swallow," as a matter of course. The gay little craft had been new-rigged and freshly painted, and Dab felt proudly sure there would be no prettier boat at anchor within sight of the Blazing Beach House.

"Ford," said he, "I've seen old Peter around the village. We'll get him to go along ; and, if the wind's favorable, we'll run the inlet, just as we did before, and approach the hotel from the sea. They've built a sort of pier, you say ; must be anchorage."

“Lots of it, in good weather. I’m in for the voyage, only I don’t care to make another discovery of the Jersey shore.”

“We won’t do that this time.”

Ford’s invitation to the great “hop” had of course included Keziah and Pamela Kinzer; but they had both excused themselves. Even their mother went so far as to say she thought they had better not go this time; and Ford felt called upon to remark,—

“Then Mr. Morris ought to come,—somebody to take care of us two.”

“Miranda,” said Ham, “let’s go, and take the baby. He has never been to a hop in his life.”

“Hasn’t he? I had to dance him all the morning, to keep him from thinking about his teeth.”

Old Peter had been easily found, and bit greedily at the offer of such a trip as that; so that “The Swallow” was sure of her crew.

“We’ll startle Blazing Beach,” said Ford, as they swept away from the landing.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON SALT WATER AND BY IT.

JENNY WALTERS was floating upon deeper water, that fine summer morning, and in a larger craft, than the saucy "Swallow." She and her father and mother were all standing upon the deck together, at the very hour when Ford and Dabney sailed out of the inlet; and she was thinking of at least one of them.

"He is changed a great deal," she said to herself. "Going to college has not improved him a bit. I hardly know what to make of him."

It was a pity she could not just then have listened to a reply Dr. Cummings was making to a very similar comment by Samantha:—

"Why, my dear, don't you understand? Dabney is a sophomore. He won't get over that sort of thing for some time yet."

"Yes; but what is it?"

"You never went to college. A sophomore is a 'wise fool,' in spite of the dictionaries. Dab is not

a bit worse than the rest; not half so bad as some. I've known fellows to wear their cap and bells clean through, and come out into the world with them after they were graduated. He'll never do that."

"I hope not. I was wondering what it could be."

So was Jenny Walters; but her enterprising father's thoughts were running in a different direction, and he was constantly availing himself of opportunities to communicate his frame of mind to his only daughter.

"You must never forget your position, Jenny. You will be an heiress, and as such you will be compelled to be on the lookout continually against vulgar people. You must be particularly careful what acquaintances you permit yourself to make."

"I have not made any."

"I've been trying to make some for you. There is an English lord on board, if I can only pick him out."

"Pity they don't wear uniform," said Jenny, with a spice of the old manner she was trying so hard to polish away; and the thought did come to her somewhat soothingly, that Annie Foster would not have walked across the deck of that steamer to secure the acquaintanceship of a boatload of lords and ladies. Her own mother was of a different way of thinking; for she woke up just then sufficiently to say, —

"A lord? A real live one? Now do just point him out to me. I'd like to see one."

Jenny herself had the first view of the curiosity, a little later in the day. The steamer was rolling a little, and a careless sailor had left a rope for a moment in the very spot where her equally careless feet could catch it ; and Jenny's fall would have been a severe one, if there had not been a young man in the way.

A slight young fellow, perhaps twenty-five years of age, of middle height, with sandy hair and a freckled face, not at all bad-looking, but dressed in a loosely fitting tweed suit, which could not have cost him over three or four pounds. There was nothing about him castellated or grand or feudal, but he assisted Jenny without any awkwardness whatever. He even expressed a hope that she was not hurt, in so pleasant and polite a manner that she was almost forbidden to suspect him of being a young Englishman.

Jenny was young, she was at sea for the first time, and she was weary of having nobody to talk to. It was the easiest thing in the world to break through the very thin hedges which remained between her and a brief conversation with the youth in the tweed suit. Easier still, an hour or so later, to let him speak to her again, and keep on speaking ; nor did she fully realize the enormity of her offence until Mr. Walters himself called her to account for it.

“Who is he? What do you know about him? What's his name?”

"Indeed, I did not ask him. I should have thought him very impertinent if he had asked mine."

"Don't speak to him again, then. Cut him dead. Looks like some emigrant that had bad luck and is going home again. There's lots of 'em every year."

Jenny thought of the quiet, well-informed, gentlemanly person she had talked with, and could not repress a hope that his luck had not been altogether bad ; but her mother had also a remark to make, —

"You ain't dressin' your best, nohow, Jenny. There's other girls on deck that go 'way ahead of you."

"They can go as far as they want to, mother."

"Nobody'll know that your father's worth a cent. I'd put on my diamond set, if I wasn't half afraid it'd be stole from me before we git ashore."

To do Mr. Walters justice, he was too shrewd an observer of the way "the right kind of people" did things, not to side with Jenny in the matter of dress ; and she was permitted to abstain from any unseemly display of what he called "dry goods" on shipboard. She hardly knew, herself, how successful she had been in the selection of her wearing-apparel, or how sincere had been the commendation of her chance acquaintance, —

"Perfect little lady. Decidedly pretty. Self-possessed, too, for so young a thing."

Mrs. Walters had by no means carried into effect

in her own case the law against speaking to strangers at sea; for she had somehow drifted into a knowledge of the names and residences of half the people in the first cabin, and was now vaguely puzzling over the fact that not a soul of them had spoken to her concerning "that lord."

Jenny was in trouble. She could hardly think of disobeying her father; and yet how could she make up her mind to be rude, if that young man from she did not know where should venture to speak to her again?

She hardly dared to look around her when they entered the cabin after dinner, for fear she should see him, and be compelled to refuse an acknowledgment of his smile and bow if he should make either at her.

Mr. Walters was in no trouble at all, but there was something like a frown upon his face. His eyes were about him, if his pretty daughter's were not; and there was that young fellow, in a tweed suit of another pattern, as if to prove that he owned two, and he was actually looking at Jenny.

"Shouldn't wonder," thought the careful father at the same moment, "if that was the lord now, coming down the cabin. He's a fine-looking man. His clothes are nice enough, but there's something queer in the cut of them. If I could only find somebody to introduce us! I declare, he is stopping to speak to that fellow. Very affably too."

“Affable” was hardly the right word with which to express the obsequious respect of the impressive-looking six-footer, as he paused in front of the tweed suit; but his voice was deep and sonorous, as he said,—

“I 'ave 'unted and 'unted, my lord, and I'm sure they're all in the boxes. Can't get at them, my lord, and I'm very sorry.”

“Your fault, then. You should have looked out for it. I'll have to get along as best I can.”

“But, Lord 'Enery”—

“Not now, please. We won't say any more about it. I'd like you to be more careful next time.”

Could it be possible! The short man in the tweed suit was actually “wiggling” that splendid-looking, distinguished—

“Jenny,” almost fiercely whispered her father, “don't you cut him. Did you hear? He said 'my lord.' He's the son of a duke. He'll be one himself, some day, if all his older brothers die. If he speaks to you”—

Jenny was struggling with a very unfilial thought and feeling, and her feet were carrying her out of range of that whisper. Her face was flushed; and there was a brightness in her eyes which made her prettier than ever, when they met those of her “chance acquaintance.”

No, she did not “cut him dead;” nor did he fail

to step forward before a cabin-full of half-envious mammas and daughters, to try for another talk with "that very nice little American girl."

Not that Jenny was small for her age; but then, she was indeed young to be conversed with by a man whose rank entitled him to admission in the highest social circles of the world, and whose family-tree was reported to have here and there a king or so hidden away among its denser foliage.

A very happy man was Mr. Walters; but his happiness was a trifle dashed, at the end of it all, by Jenny's assurance, a second time, that she had neither told "Lord Henry" her own name, nor given him the slightest reason to suspect that she knew his own.

"You'd ought to have done it, I'm sure," said her mother. "He'll never be able to find out whether you're an heiress or not."

That was probably one of the things for which the young man with two tweed suits was not especially anxious; but Mr. Walters would have given something for a chance to let him know how very successful some of his own later operations in mining-shares had been.

Still, he had sense enough to be proud of his daughter, and of the way in which she had held her own.

Perhaps Dab Kinzer himself would have been

proud of his young-lady correspondent, if he could have witnessed her very correct behavior; but, long before the passengers of that steamer went in to dinner, he and Ford Foster were tacking to and fro, in "The Swallow," in front of the gay piazzas of the Blazing Beach House, half annoyed to find that their own was by no means the one solitary yacht to be seen and admired, then and there.

"Why, Dab," said Ford, when first they came in view of that coast-line, "there's a dozen of 'em. Some of them are big ones."

"Bringing hoppers to the hop. It'll be a grand affair."

"Of course it will. Don't let's go ashore just yet. They are working their telescopes and opera-glasses on the piazza."

So they were; and it was not a great while before "The Swallow" and her crew were recognized by at least one party of observers.

"I am glad Ford has brought him," said Annie to her mother. "And what a pretty little craft she is! We must make Dabney stay, and give us a sail to-morrow."

When, at last, the requisite amount of parade-tacking had been performed, and "The Swallow" swept gracefully in to the pier, there was quite a party waiting to receive the young collegians; and Ford remarked to Dabney,—

"If Annie hasn't picked up Old Rocks and Ultimatum!"

"Byerly isn't there."

"He'll turn up. Most likely he's hunting along the shore, for seaweed."

That was a false calculation ; for one of Dabney's early discoveries, after landing, was that his friend was temporarily absent from the hotel, and no man could tell where he had gone. It was just as well, he thought ; for Byerly was not a man who would suffer much from the loss of any kind of a dance.

There yet remained time, that day, for a bit of a sail off shore ; and it did the two yachtsmen a world of good to see De Mush and Van Carraway and Cobb on the pier, pretending not to be watching them, as they helped Annie Foster and a whole bevy of her young-lady friends get aboard. They could not hear Winfield Scott Cobb say to his friends, —

"Kinzer's yacht, is it? I didn't know he was that kind of a nob. Why, he's raked in the swellest kind of a cargo. She's a pretty one."

"That's Foster's sister," said De Mush.

"I mean the boat. Look here, boys, it'll pay to be civil to those fellows, when we get back."

"No, it won't," said Van Carraway emphatically. "Any kind of fellow can get afloat nowadays. I move we snub 'em, right along."

The question was argued somewhat freely, but

the "snub" carried the day; and when the music struck up in the great dining-room of the Blazing Beach House that evening,—temporarily stripped of tables, and transformed into a ball-room,—neither Ford Foster nor Dabney Kinzer was aware that he had been voted a "nobody," in spite of the performances of "The Swallow."

The proprietors of the house had spared neither pains nor money to make that "hop" a success; and when Dabney entered the ball-room, the proudest man in it, with Annie Foster on his arm, Ford on the other side of her, and Mr. and Mrs. Foster behind them, he thought he had never before looked upon a scene so altogether splendid.

He had not, indeed, except it might be the Academy of Music; for not only were the regular army and navy well represented in full uniform, but several companies of a New York "crack" militia regiment had come over in *their* "full uniforms," beside which the regulation blue and gold paled into every-day clothing. The ladies were in the fullest kind of dress; and the picture which resulted was quite enough to turn the brain of any young man who had not yet entered his junior year at Bullford.

Dabney's evening began with a disappointment; for he hardly had time to look around him, before Annie Foster's dancing-card had four names on it, and she was carried away from him by a tall, broad-

shouldered fellow in army blue, of whom Ford said, "He? Oh! that's Major Millford. He's the great Indian fighter. Been scalped three times. Had to live a week, once, on the Pawnees he killed and cooked for himself. No militia about him."

Dab was really grateful to Ford for finding him some one to dance with. Who she was, he really never knew. It was a desperate adventure. No college examination had ever cost him a tenth part of the trepidation he experienced when he led out that young woman, and undertook to not make a blunder while the music lasted. She spoke to him several times, and he was afterwards sure he had answered her politely; but beyond that his memory did not serve him. It seemed to him that he was taking a great plunge into an unmapped ocean which he had heard of, but never sailed in, and that he was in danger of running ashore any moment.

The young lady herself was entirely satisfied, for she was not of the talking kind; and Dabney at last led her to a seat, precisely as he had seen Major Millford lead Annie Foster. Then he was floored; for another dancing-man took her away, and Dabney felt as if he would like to sit down and look on.

"I'm learning a good deal to-night," he said to himself. "Wonder what has become of Byerly. If he were here, perhaps he could explain it to me."

No, he was wrong there. The mathematical tutor

could not have thrown any light whatever upon that hop, or upon Dab's mental experiences as a partaker in its confused splendor.

He had yet an experience before him. Ford found him one more partner ; but after that he was again "stranded," as he expressed it, and was wondering if he should enjoy the remainder of that "hop" in a chair, when he suddenly found himself remarking,—

"Annie Foster? Dancing with De Mush? It's too bad!"

He did not know that at that very moment Annie was saying,—

"There he is. Please take me over to him, Mr. De Mush."

"Beg pardon, Miss Foster?"

"Why, my brother's chum. Young Kinzer, your classmate. He and I are great friends. I have kept the next dance for him."

"Ah, — oh! Yes. I see him."

There was no help for it. De Mush had fairly begged for that next waltz ; and here he was compelled to carry the best dancer, and by all odds the most beautiful young lady in the room, to "that fellow Kinzer." He knew Van Carraway and Cobb were watching him, and he had had trouble enough in securing one brief turn with Miss Foster. Both of the others had failed utterly. There was no help for him, nor for Dabney either ; but the sophomore

spirit was strong in both, for when Annie paused in front of the latter, looking more angelic than he had ever before seen her look, and said to him,—

“Now, Dabney, I’ve come for you. Why did you not come for me? It is too bad of you to neglect me,”—

Dabney rose to his feet like a man in a dream, and neither looked at De Mush, nor spoke to him; and the last representative of “one of the oldest families in America” was under the necessity of not seeing and not speaking, and of slipping so suddenly back through the crowd, that Annie was half surprised at it.

“Where has he gone? Dear me! By the way, Dabney, what was his name? He is an elegant dancer. Does he know any thing?”

“Not a thing,” said Dabney. “There’s a crowd of them. Greatest fools you ever heard of.”

“I thought so; but he dances well. I’m glad you do. Look at Ford. Dear me! Come now, Dabney.”

It was so hard, even in that moment of triumph, to be made so well aware that the magnificent being who was treating him so kindly, was all the while regarding him as a boy,—a sort of distant younger brother!

He a boy? He? With all his college life and honors and dignity so fresh upon him, and his own yacht—well, Ham Morris’s yacht—at anchor at

the north side of the pier? It was well for his success as a dancer, that all other thoughts were so speedily absorbed in the one idea that he had at last reached the summit of a kind of hill. Not to all time could the course of events bear him backward from the one fact of his present experience. The raw, awkward, ungainly, Long-Island country boy had somehow climbed and climbed, he knew not what or how, until here he was, in all that splendid company, floating through seas of light and music with Annie Foster.

It was surely not a thing worth living for or working for, and it had come to him unsought, unthought of; but Dabney Kinzer could never drift back or slide down, in his own estimation of his position in life, from the place to which Annie's almost sisterly goodwill had so considerably pulled him up.

It was an inward satisfaction, at the close of it all, just after she had said, "You dance very well, Dabney," and after he had seen Cobb and Van Carraway vainly manœuvring behind De Mush for an opportunity, to hand his graceful partner over to the stately charge of Major Millford.

"Ford says he danced well enough till a Camanche warrior put a lance through his leg. He's a man anyhow, and that's more'n they are."

It is a good deal to be a man, but sometimes it is not quite all that the exacting world requires. One

other member of the quartet had an experience to record that evening. A few hours before the hop began, Dr. Cummings returned to his office in something like a state of excitement.

"Gone to the Blazing Beach House!" he muttered angrily. "The least disturbance of his brain, just now— Here, Dick! Dick Lee!"

"Yes, sir. I'm here."

"You know the way to the Blazing Beach House. There's a boat leaves the mainland at half-past seven this evening. Get ready. I'll have a packet for you to deliver. Sharp, now."

Dick was ready quickly enough.

"Go right over. Find Gen. Overman, and hand him that, and this note. You may stop and see your mother on your way back. Get here early to-morrow."

"Yes, sir. I will come right back."

So it was that among the many eyes that saw the Blazing Beach House hop in its glory were those of Mr. Richard Lee; and he looked on with intense pride while Cap'n Dab Kinzer waltzed with Annie Foster. It seemed to him eminently fit and proper that "the best fellow along shore" should have such things come to him.

Then, however, there arose yet another thought in the heart and brain of Dick Lee; and it could hardly have come to him so vividly and with such a pang of

simple pain, if he had not already climbed so far above the mental status in which Dab Kinzer's first helping hand had found him.

"Not for me," he said to himself. "I am black, not white. No use. Work, study, know ever so much, — no matter what I do, all that isn't for the like of me. I wasn't born to it. Wonder if there is any place where it doesn't make any difference how a man was born? S'pose maybe it's heaven. Then, I just know that thing there isn't any kind of a heaven."

He made no attempt to speak to Ford or Dabney, but went back to the mainland by the return boat, never dreaming that every dancer in the great, glittering, gorgeous ballroom had made for himself or herself, as perfectly as Dick had made it, the discovery that the "social event" they had been a part of was not "any kind of a heaven."

Dab and Ford made it for themselves, and they were glad to be at sea again next morning in "The Swallow;" and, for some reason or other, they were not half so severe in their denunciations of the evening's performance as were De Mush and Van Carraway and Winfield Scott Cobb. The latter, indeed, was especially caustic upon the "militiamen," and upon "those shoulder-strapped plebeians who had got into the regular army somehow. Hardly one of 'em belonged to the old army families."

It was not until the following day, when Dabney and Old Peter took "The Swallow" home, that the former learned how it was he had missed meeting Mr. Byerly.

"Such a nice visit we had with him," said Pamela. "He and Keziah went a fishing in 'The Jenny'; but they did not catch any thing except three sculpins and a flounder."

And Keziah was much too anxious to hear about the "hop," and to know what Annie Foster wore, to tell any further particulars of her own excursion on the bay.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STEPS UP THE LADDER OF LIFE.

JENNY WALTERS was hardly as thoughtful of the friends she left behind her as Annie Foster had been. For that or for some other reason, Dabney Kinzer did not receive a single letter from her during her entire summer in Europe. Once only, a newspaper came to him, with her familiar handwriting upon the envelope,—a local print from some unheard-of place in the North of Scotland. There was a marked article, of course; a list of names in one corner, an obsequious announcement of the invited guests who had been present at a hunting breakfast,—whatever that might be,—given by a very “noble house” whose residence honored that corner of Scotland. The names of the Walters family were there; and Dabney wondered how long it had been since the head of it acquired the right to style himself the “Honorable William Walters.”

“Never been any thing higher than a justice-

peace," growled Dab. "And they've put her down as the 'Honorable Miss Jeannette Walters.' She couldn't have had any hand in that, and she's marked it out with her pen. Made her mad, I'll bet."

He did not do Jenny any more than justice ; and she felt somehow sure he would, or she could not have sent him that paper. Jenny had wanted dreadfully to write to somebody in America that day ; and it made her feel lonely and homesick when she searched her memory, and could find no one she cared to talk to, and say just what she wanted to say. She even began a letter to Dab ; and then she tore it up, muttering, —

"No, I won't. I'm not half sure I'll ever care to write to him again. I do hope going to college will not spoil him."

There was no doubt but what their summer vacation did a good deal for all four of that quartet, for Dick Lee strongly insisted that he had a share in it. Dr. Cummings even went so far as to give him a whole week off, that he might go a-fishing with Dab and Ford ; and he astonished them both by the strange things he had picked up relating to the organization of the several fish they pulled in. Nothing of the kind had been taught them at Bullford ; and Ford exclaimed, —

"Look here, Dick, it won't do. If you stick a long name on any thing else we hook, I'll throw it overboard."

Dick was more than a little proud of his advances in the art of scientific name-giving, and was not at all aware how large a part of what passes for "science" itself is nothing more. Neither of his two friends were any wiser as yet; but all three of them were pretty sure to become so in the long run, after they should have learned how to think.

It was the intent and purpose of the studies of their junior year to make a beginning in that direction; and both of them already had some help from Kent and Blackstone.

Dabney in particular had other help, for his mother's letters were growing more and more serious. Some of the later ones were so gloomy in their tone as almost to alarm him concerning the state of her health.

That was about the middle of the first term of the junior year, when all things around him at Bullford were hourly assuming a tone of profounder scholarship and greater dignity.

He was considering the matter, as only a man in his junior year knows how to consider, when Ford Foster one evening brought him a bit of unpleasant news:—

"Grand thing for little By."

"Byerly? What's happened to him?"

"Haven't you heard? Why, the professor of mathematics that was in Setting Sun College has

gone the way of all figures, and Byerly's got the place. Biggest kind of a rise for him, and a salary of three thousand. Special endowment."

"You don't say! Well, I'm glad on his account, but he'll be missed at Bullford."

"Reckon he will. He's just the fellow I'd like to send my boys to. I'm going to find out all I can about that Setting Sun concern. It's dreadfully far West, though."

"Strange that there should be such a college in a new country."

"Tisn't so much newer than this," said Frank Harley. "But the salary, that is heavy for a young concern."

"Byerly's pegged down for it, sure; and he's got to go out right away."

"I'm going right around to see him," exclaimed Dab; and go he did, but once more he was doomed to disappointment in the matter of meeting the tutor. Mr. Byerly had been out of town for nearly two hours by the time Dabney reached his rooms; and again no man could say whither he had gone.

"Too bad! Wonder 'f he'll come back here before he leaves for the Setting Sun. Of course he will. I wouldn't like to have him get away for good without saying good-by to him."

There was less danger of that than he imagined; and, before he could make up his mind what could

be the matter with his mother, he received yet another letter from her, and this time Dabney himself caught the blues from it.

"That's what he's been up to, is it? It's awful! Keziah! Away off there! I don't wonder mother's down-hearted about it. She won't have anybody but Pamela left. I see. She's known about it all along, and they've been waiting till they knew he was sure of this Western professorship. It's all right. He's a good fellow, but it kind o' seems as if I were in some way responsible for it."

A long fit of thinking that letter gave him.

"Third wedding in our house since I can remember. It'll be Pamela next. I'll have to stay at home and take care of mother—well, no, not as long as Ham and Miranda and that baby are there."

At all events, the news lasted him and his friends as a topic for steady consideration up to the Christmas holidays; and Dabney went home with a genuine feeling of dread relating to his meeting with his mother.

He might have spared himself the whole of it, however; for he found her in the parlor, discussing all sorts of things with Keziah and Mr. Byerly, and Dabney was at once admitted to a membership in the "council." It made him realize the fact that he was a junior, and had crossed the age-line into his twentieth year. He had already received a good

deal of help in that direction from a shadowy line of dark-brown fuzz which was slowly forming upon his upper lip, in sympathy with a similar growth upon the western borders of his cheeks. He knew, too, that he was getting broader in the shoulders, and that his voice was deeper.

The widow Kinzer knew exactly how to get up a wedding, and precisely whom to invite to what she called "a quiet one." Mr. Byerly had friends of his own, several of whom, including his mother and sister, were sure to come. Ford and Annie would not have been omitted for any thing; and Mr. Walters himself remarked to Jenny,—

"The Kinzer family are forming their connections remarkably well. There is nothing more respectable, socially, than a professor in a first-class college. Pity it is a Western concern. I think you had better go. It will show that we are not above remembering our old neighbors."

Jenny went, and that was the first time she had met Dab Kinzer since her return from Europe. She startled him a little; for she, too, had had a birthday, as well as a fair experience of foreign travel, and it had carried her well into her eighteenth year. She was no kind of a "little girl" any more; and Dabney was conscious of a queer feeling that she had caught up with him and passed him, and was now the older of the two. He would gladly have given

her all the time he could spare from Mr. Byerly's mother and sister, who were under his especial care, but for the fact that Jenny insisted upon giving all her own time to Keziah and Pamela and "dear Mrs. Kinzer."

The widow herself declared that she had never known a girl to improve as Jenny had ; and was half indignant when Dabney calmly remarked, —

"She'll be almost equal to Annie Foster some day, in every thing but good looks."

Little he knew of what was in the immediate future.

Just after the wedding-party left the house, and the Fosters were preparing to follow, that they might reach the city by the same train, Ford handed a parcel of something to his chum, remarking, "To be opened after my — well, after I'm out of sight. I really couldn't bear to see you do it. I shall never again be the light-hearted youth I once was. Farewell, Dabney. I go!"

Go he did ; and in a minute or so more Dabney was exhibiting to Miranda, with desperate calmness, — while Pamela stared out of the window in the direction in which Keziah had departed, and Mrs. Kinzer cried over the baby, — a set of bits of stylish-looking pasteboard, whereupon Mr. and Mrs. Foster expressed their desire that all that was left of the Kinzer family should be present, and so forth

so forth, upon the following Tuesday, at the marriage of their daughter Annie and Major Langdon Millford, United States Army.

That bit of news was a great help to Mrs. Kinzer, in her hour of trial; but, when she imparted it to Glorianna Lee, that good woman remarked,—

“Miss Kinzer, doesn’t you t’ink de gals gits married powerful young nowadays? Can’t dar be nuffin done to put a stop to it?”

“Why, Glorianna, she’s twenty-three.”

“You don’t tell me! W’y, w’en she was ober here an’ spent de summer, dey said she was on’y nineteen. Law sakes! da’s long ago now. We’s gittin’ along, Miss Kinzer.”

Dabney could but feel that the world was moving. For a little while he almost felt as if it were moving away from under him. Up to that very moment the idea had never occurred to him that Annie Foster was a young woman, like Miranda and Samantha and Keziah. What was the use of a man bringing up an angel, year after year, only at last to be invited to come and see her carried away,—away,—nobody knew where,—by an Indian-killer in a blue uniform?

“He is a splendid-looking fellow,” said Dab to Ham heroically. “I saw him at the hop. They say he is rich, too, and I’m glad of that. Such a girl as Annie ought never to want for any thing.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT THE WINNING-POST: END OF THE COLLEGE RACE.

THE record of any long journey is, as travellers know, mainly made up of the things which occurred at its several stopping-places. The mile-stones between come in for as much attention as do any other but the really remarkable features of the country travelled through. In like manner, the record of any quiet and secluded life, such as that of a young man at college ought to be, consists to a remarkable extent of the things which come to pass in its vacations,—its exceptional prolonged contacts with that outer world for which he is supposed to be preparing.

Both Ford and Dabney felt sure they could never again have such a remarkable vacation as that; and at the same time they were both fixed in the idea that college life could not from thenceforth be to them what it had been.

Annie's wedding was a grand affair, and it was almost a necessity that it should take place in church.

"She would have preferred a quiet, parlor, stay-at-home wedding," said Ford; "but the boarding-house was in the way. Mother wouldn't have it; father wouldn't; and I agreed with them. I think the major did, for he said something about having colonels enough to fill any small church."

In fact, the army-men turned out to that wedding in a way which would have gone to the heart of Winfield Scott Cobb, if he had been among the invited; but he and Van Carraway and De Mush were already back at Bullford. So was Frank Harley, the only occupant of the "rooms for three;" and he was conscious of a sort of "left-out" feeling, in that he, too, had not been at Ford's sister's wedding. He could but feel, too, that all these marriages and hops and things were drawing his two friends closer to each other, and a little away from him. Not but what he had been having a good time; and he brought back with him the added responsibility of two more lady correspondents, both of them older than himself by several years. Still, as he sat there alone, reading the written and printed accounts of the matters Ford and Dabney had been engaged in, and the varied epistles which had accumulated in his absence, it all worked together to give him a sense of loneliness.

"No home. No sisters. Nobody to care for me particularly. The fact of it is, I've got to take care of myself a little. It sha'n't be my fault if I'm not well cared for."

There might be both good and bad, as he himself should determine, in a conclusion like that; but it is rarely well for a fellow in his junior year to be already making plans for the future which all centre upon himself. It would have been better if he could have had cause for feeling as Ford Foster did.

"Dabney," said that young gentleman, on the cars, after all was over, "I shall be glad when my penal term at Bullford is up. I'd even consent to be *pardoned* out."

"In a hurry to get through? What for?"

"Don't you see? Well, I suppose it can't work exactly so in your case. Your mother has Pamela left, and Miranda, and Ham, and the baby, and Samantha's close by. But my mother,—think of her! Annie'll be out on the frontiers, maybe, fighting Sioux and binding up Major Millford, and mother'll be all alone."

"Your father won't run away."

"He isn't Annie."

"Well, you're not, exactly"—

"But I'd better arrange to be around as much as I can. I'll write home twice as often as I did. Fact is, Dab, father'll feel it too. Let's pitch into Kent, and read something more. A fellow can't know too much law, if he's going to be a lawyer."

There was sense in that; and Dab was aware of a great feverish hunger, growing and gnawing within

him, stirred recently to a sort of famine-like, wolfish ferocity, for the knowledge which is power. He had discerned, though not very clearly, that there is a great deal of knowledge in which there is no power whatever, except such as a bushel-basket may boast of in its capacity to hold a bushel ; and he did not care to be a mere basket, however full heaped up.

“Ford,” he said, “we must whip the regular Bullford course. It won’t do to fail on that. But I’m in for hard work of all sorts now,—I am.”

“By the way,” replied Ford, “I’ve heard from Joe Hart and Fuz. They have whipped the regular course at Spearmouth College at last.”

“Whipped it? How’s that?”

“Beat it out of sight. Joked it to death. It was too funny for any thing, and the faculty couldn’t see it. So Joe and Fuz have been sent home to explain to uncle Hart just where the laugh came in.”

“Sorry. What a tumble for them!”

“Well, no : they were so near the lower step in their class, that they didn’t have far to fall. The door out of college is always wide open just in front of that lower stair.”

“It isn’t any joke, though. Sorry for them. I say, I’m going in to win!”

Within three weeks from that time, Dabney had as many different contributions sent back to him from three several magazines.

If we are to judge of English universities by the accounts given of them by Englishmen, who may be supposed to describe them fairly, the most deeply marked distinction between them and the best American educational institutions is to be found in the vastly larger proportion of American undergraduates who attend well to the business in hand, and do the work they were sent to do.

There was a fast set at Bullford, as there is at every college in the world ; but it was very small, as it surely is at every American college or university, and the very "fastness" involved but a minimum of vice. No American is born to any "rank" which can be employed as a cloak for dishonor ; and every American boy is sure to have the idea presented to him, in some way that he can comprehend, that vice is dishonor, and dissipation is itself a disgrace.

It is not easy for a young man to face the covert, often the open and expressed, contempt, which surely attaches to any preference on his part for the life of a hog rather than that of a man.

There were pigs in the class to which the trio belonged ; but they were few, and they dropped out fast in the sophomore and junior years. Hardly a man of them succeeded in carrying his trough with him into the senior year, even at the lower end of the "lower third."

Too many, even of the good workers, were com-

elled, in one way and another, to abandon their course of study; and the fourth year began and ended with so small a remnant of the original class that the several professors in charge of it were able to give almost individual supervision to its membership. It was well for the students who remained, in some respects; but it was a pity, nevertheless, since those who unavoidably "dropped out" could never cease to regret the curtailment of their mental training.

The "junior" summer vacation came and passed, as Ford remarked, "without a single wedding to mar its felicity;" but Dabney found himself in an unlooked-for position at home.

The house was not what he could call empty; for his first nephew was toddling all over it, and his second was usurping Miranda's and the best of Ham Morris's time. But the absence of Keziah and Samantha made a gap which nothing could fill, and Mrs. Kinzer seemed to expect Dabney to fill it. She consulted him about every thing, even to the solemn question as to whether she had better try winter wheat again, after two successive failures.

Then, too, Samantha had not yet decided what name she should give her little girl; and Mrs. Kinzer was positive in her assertion,—

"She shall not name it after me. Euphemia is old-fashioned. I know what you say,—Effie is pretty enough; but she won't like it when she grows up."

"Annie?" suggested Dab.

"That's prettier. It was your father's fancy, to give your sisters the names he did,—all after his mother and his aunts. Now, Dabney, what shall it be?"

"Dido."

"Nonsense!"

There was a long talk over it; and then came a letter from Samantha, informing them that "pet" had been christened "Susan," after the lamented mother of Dr. Cummings himself.

"Of all that's old-fashioned!" exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer; but Dab replied philosophically,—

"Susan is bad, but Susie is very good. It is better than Dido."

Alas for Dabney's ideals! He was just in the heat of preparation for his senior examinations that year, when Ford Foster received a triumphant letter from his mother, quoting liberally from one she had received from Fort Big Massacre in the unknown West, announcing that another little girl had been christened "Annie."

"Three of 'em in one family," remarked Ford. "Mother's name is Annie. If I live long enough, I hope I may see four."

"The world moves," replied Dab, "and we are getting old. What is that remark of Kent's relating to the rights of women?"

"The old fool! Do you suppose he had four sisters? Dabney, you and I have a mission before us."

"What kind of a mission?"

"Frank," said Ford, "you know all about missions. What's ours?"

"Same as mine."

"What's that?"

"To find out what you're good for. It just puzzles me. Sometimes it seems as if I wasn't good for any thing in particular."

"Win the senior Greek prize, then," said Ford. "It's expected of you. The Aleph Bets'll murder you if you let any other fellow get in ahead of you."

"I shall win it," said Frank quietly.

He had intended to do more than that; but when, at the end of it all, the decision of the faculty was made public, it did but put in official form the silent vote of the entire class, for Dabney Kinzer was named valedictorian.

Steady work had done it, and the curious capacity he had, as Ford Foster said, of always being "right there with the rudder in his hand."

"Dabney," he almost shouted, when he brought in the news, "you're the man for my money. You can steer. I've always noticed it of you, and half the time you don't seem to know you're steering. Won't it tickle Dick Lee!"

Very little did they or anybody else know what

an amount of "steering" on his own account had been done by Richard Lee during those four years. Dr. Cummings himself was hardly aware of it, until he found his young colored friend assisting him skilfully and intelligently in the trying points of several difficult operations, when other professional help was unattainable.

"Never saw a cooler hand," said the doctor to Samantha. "I knew he studied, but I hardly guessed what it had done for him. He deserves a diploma better than do nine out of ten, and I'll see that he has one some day. Meantime, I'm going to raise his wages, and keep him."

Dick had been known as "Dr. Lee" among Glorianna's acquaintances for at least two years before that, and had been called upon for scores and scores of prescriptions, not to speak of the "advice" he had given. His reputation among the colored population of the Long Island shore was something phenomenal; only, as his mother expressed it, —

"Dey couldn't 'spect 'im to gib up his New York practice to 'tend to no clam-diggers."

A proud woman was Glorianna; and it was almost with an air of superiority that she asked Mrs. Kinzer one day, —

"Doesn't you t'ink it's mos' time young Mr. Kinzer got t'rough wid schoolin', and begun to look aroun'? He's ole nuff to do somefin'."

"He will pretty soon."

"It'll take 'im a heap ob time to ketch up wid my Dick w'en he gits out ob school, do de bes' he knows how."

That might be; but all the available remnants of the Kinzer, Morris, and Foster families went on to Bullford to attend the commencement exercises, when Ford and Dabney and Frank were graduated.

Nor they only; for Frank Harley's turn to have a family on his hands had come at last.

Prolonged service in India had unfitted the Rev. Dr. Harley for any further struggles with fevers and heat and heathen; and he had returned to his native land with his faithful wife, in time to hear their only son deliver the Greek oration.

Oh, how proud they were! And how happy was Frank!

Mrs. Kinzer and Mrs. Foster fairly took possession of Frank's mother; and it was by a sort of common consent that they all three talked about "our boys," rarely mentioning any one of them by his separate name all that day. They sat all together near the front; and there was reason enough on that one spot in the great gathering, why the valedictorian, the Greek orator, and the Latin prize—for Ford Foster had won that—did not recognize any other of the listening faces before them. At the close, however, as they were coming down from the plat-

form, their way was barred by a presence which towered above even Dabney.

“My dear boys! I’m proud of you!”

“Dr. Brandegee!”

Three voices in a breath, three right hands out in quick, enthusiastic recognition.

“You have done well, all of you.”

“Your work, doctor.”

“Not exactly; but I came all the way from Grantley that I might see what you had been making out of my work. I thank God you have not wasted it.”

There was no doubt of the deep feeling with which the big heart of the principal of Grantley Academy was swelling, as he looked upon those three specimens of his “work,” and witnesses to his fidelity.

A tide of questions followed, and Ford especially asked after Mrs. Myers and Almira.

“Give them our love, doctor. We ate a great deal in those days, and they never complained once.”

Other messages were sent in a way that looked as if the quartet, or that part of it, must have retained a mental directory of the population of Grantley.

“I saw Deacon Robinson and Bob, and Mr. and Mrs. Fallow, just before I came away. They are almost as proud as I am.”

“Tell the deacon,” said Dabney, “that Dick Lee is beating us all.”

There would have been more messages received

and given, no doubt, if by that time Dr. Brandegee had not been all but swept away by a sudden flood of Kinzers, Morrises, Fosters, and Harleys.

Mrs. Samantha Cummings, unfortunate woman that she was, after travelling all the way to Bullford, had been compelled to remain at the hotel with "Susan," on account of a case of infant-railway-colic, and an incompetent nurse; but her husband came promptly home, and told her all about the performances.

"Did either of them forget?"

"Break down? Samantha! They did especially well, all of them. Especially Dabney. He has a splendid voice, and his oration was a good one. Do you know he is taller than I am? Good weight too. You should have seen your mother. I watched her half the time. The boys told me there were thirty-one mothers in that audience; and I counted more than that of what I took to be grandmothers, not to speak of aunts. As for sisters and cousins"—

"How I do wish Keziah could have been there, and Annie Foster,—I mean Mrs. Millford."

"Miranda sat it out, and then she and Ham went in a hurry. Hope they found their babies all right."

"It's too bad. Susie went to sleep in ten minutes after you left, and she hasn't waked up yet. Isn't she sweet!"

It was a grand time, but after it was over the

young graduates were compelled to gather once more in their rooms. They had already held a levee there of their relatives, and all now left them of their college life was the process of packing up.

"There isn't so much to be done," said Dabney. "We only left out enough so as not to spoil the show for them. Let's go in, and finish it."

"Hold on, Dab," exclaimed Ford.

"What for?"

"Well, I was thinking. There's a pile of things lying loose around these rooms that we can't put in our trunks and boxes."

"What things?" asked Frank.

"Four years"—

"Now, Ford," said Dabney, "don't you get sentimental. I've been fighting it off for a week. I'd no idea you'd break down."

"Right in the middle of the funeral services," added Frank. "But I've got something to tell."

"Out with it."

"We are all going to New York. An old friend of father's has left him a legacy. I'm going to be an engineer."

"Engineer? Not any kind of a missionary?"

"Me a missionary?"

"Yes. What'll you tell all your old-lady correspondents? They'll lose their interest in you."

"Can't help it. I won't be any thing I ain't fit

for. Father was fit to be a missionary, and so was mother. But they're going to live in the city ; and I can study engineering there, and then go to Europe to finish on mines and things. Isn't it great ? It was only settled this very day."

"Frank," said Ford, "I can't help you much on engineering ; but, if there's any thing you don't know about law or Greek or the world, come to me."

The packing went bravely on ; but, before it was half done, Ham and Mrs. Kinzer and Pamela, and Mr. and Mrs. Harley, and Ford's father and mother, were all either looking on or helping. Mrs. Kinzer gave it up after Dab had taken some of Ford Foster's books away from her three times ; and Pamela retreated in confusion from a task which involved the handling of so many small bundles of white letter-envelopes addressed in so many different hands to those three young men ; but order gradually grew out of the confusion, and at last the trunks were locked, and the boxes nailed. The days of that trio at Bullford were numbered, and they seemed to them already like a dream.

It grew more and more dreamy all the way to New York. Even the congratulatory letter from Professor Byerly, which awaited Dabney, did not wake him up. Both the others promised to come over before long, and take a sail with him ; but even the prospect of that had a mist of unreality about it. He "mooned

around all day," as Ham phrased it, and went to bed, and slept, and dreamed wofully confused dreams.

It was an hour after breakfast of that second day, that Dabney strolled down to the little landing, and stood there with his hands in his pockets, debating with himself whether there would be any real life in a row on the bay in "The Jenny."

"Dab, my son?"

"Mother, you here?"

"Letters for you, Dabney. One of them is from Mr. Foster. He has written to me, and he wants to have you study law in his office."

"In his office? With Ford? Why, mother, that would be the making of me."

"I know it, my son. I have got to lose you again. He wants you to come over in a very few days, for he says he can set you at work at once."

"I've studied law ever since I went to Bullford, after a fashion."

"So he says. I did not know that."

"It was no secret, mother. I wanted to shorten my time after I came out, before passing an examination."

Poor Mrs. Kinzer! She had counted on having her boy with her now, for ever so long. She had been dreaming, too, of quiet days at home, and drives with Dab, and walks around the farm, and on seeing him in the family pew at church on Sundays;

and now it was all gone. She could have cried; but she did not, for she was now unselfishly thinking,—

“What a splendid thing it will be for Dabney!”

And he? All of a sudden the mist and dreaminess seemed swept away, and he saw a career before him. Mr. Foster’s offer had a ring of life and work in it. His letter to Dabney was as curt and clear and business-like as if his young friend had been one of his clients; all discussion of particulars being postponed to a personal interview.

“Mother, I’ll be sure and come over every Saturday, and spend Sunday with you. May I? Will you keep a room for me?”

“Come to the house, Dabney. I daren’t trust myself to say any more out here.”

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAW AND THE PROFITS.

"DAB," said Ham Morris a few days later, "I'm afraid you'll have a thin kind of a time of it for a while in the city."

"How's that?"

"Why, Foster doesn't propose to pay you a salary from the start?"

"Of course not. It'll be some time before I've a right to any."

"Well, now, I don't know all about your mother's affairs; but she's been paying out a good deal. She did well by all the girls. Your college bills have been a spicy figure. The crops haven't been what they used to be, for two or three years back. She won't be able to set you up in the kind of style you'd like."

"What do I care?" said Dabney proudly. "If I can't afford a ten-dollar boarding-house, I'll take a five-dollar one."

“Pretty slim rations at five dollars a week.”

“I won’t be a burden on her, at all events. Not a cent that isn’t necessary, nor for a day longer”—

“That isn’t what I was coming to. I’m doing first-rate. The farm’s a good one; and I bought all the hay there was last year, just before the price went up. That was your mother’s work too. She’s got more business in her little finger! Well, what I mean is this: if ever you get hard up, you know just where to come. I know you won’t do any thing foolish.”

“Ham, you’re the best fellow in the world. If I’d borrow of any one, it’d be of you; but I won’t. I’ll never owe any man a cent as long as I live.”

“Oh, yes, you will! But you’d better not owe any thing to outsiders, about these days. Hurt you like Sam Hill.”

“Not a dollar, Ham, if I have to go back to somebody like Mrs. Myers, and eat corn-cake.”

“You might do worse’n that. You all grew finely when you were at her house.”

“I almost wish I were back there, sometimes.”

“Well, no, Dab. It’s cost too much to bring you along to where you are. Mind what I say, now. I’ve talked it with Miranda.”

“Ham, I’ll argue all your suits for nothing, and I’ll be the best kind of an uncle to those little chaps.”

"They'll give you a chance one of these days
Be coming to study law in your office."

"They don't look much like lawyers just now,
either one of them."

"I can't say. You ought to hear Little Jim argue
the porridge case with his mother and brothers."

There was no doubt but what Ham Morris was a
genuine good fellow; but that very afternoon Mrs.
Kinzer called her son into her own room for a special
consultation.

"Dabney, would you mind boarding with Saman-
tha?"

"Why, that would be elegant, mother; but what
would Dr. Cummings say?"

"He? It was his own idea. Samantha writes to
say so, and she wants you not to think of going
anywhere else. I can arrange it with them."

"But the expense, mother. I won't ask any favors
of Dr. Cummings, not if he were three times my
brother-in-law; and such board as that costs money."

"So it will, Dabney. I wouldn't consent to their
taking less than a fair rate. But then, Dabney, I'm
not at all poor just now. I didn't tell you nor Ham;
but I bought all the hay I could lay my hands on,
just before the price went up. I told Ham, and he
bought a little."

"Whew!" Dab's whistle was a long one, but not
at all disrespectful. "Mother, have you been learn-

ing from old Walters? That's the way he got his best start, they say."

"He's above hay now; but I made enough to see that you are provided for until you can take care of yourself. But, Dabney, if you find yourself getting sick, or any thing, you won't stay at Samantha's? You'll come right home to me?"

She was a most practical and business-like woman, but it did Dab a world of good to hide his head in her lap for a few minutes, and feel the soft stroke of her hand upon the mass of his dark, glossy hair. There was something fell on his cheek too, when he happened to turn his head a little to one side,—and yet he knew it was not raining up there in her room.

He had a very different kind of interview, next day, with the keen-eyed lawyer, through whose law-offices he was to work his way into a great and terribly over-crowded profession. There were whole regiments of young aspirants who would have envied him the advantage which came to him in that way, all unsought.

Unsought, indeed, but not unworked for; since Mr. Foster himself had said to his wife,—

"I've had my eyes on Dabney for years. He is just the kind of man I want. I can trust him through and through; and that's an enormous point nowadays. Besides, I believe he has in him the making of a good lawyer, and nobody knows how scarce they are."

"Is not the profession over-full, dear?"

"Yes, it's full. There's about one lawyer and a half to every really good client. But what is it full of? If Dab Kinzer hasn't the stuff in him for something better, I'm mistaken. Ford— Well, of course, Ford was born for a good lawyer."

"So like his father :" that was what Mrs. Foster said in her heart ; but her spoken words were,—

"Well, my dear, I hope you won't be disappointed. I like his mother and his sisters ; and I've liked Dabney too, ever since he behaved so well when they were all driven out to sea in that sailboat."

"So have I ! So have I ! If he can learn to steer a difficult case as well as he steered Ham's yacht, he'll be a hard man to beat. You see, he stuck to it all night, in a fog and a storm ; and that's just what we lawyers have to do all the time."

It was seldom Mr. Foster indulged himself in a figure of speech ; and he did not employ any whatever when he found himself face to face with Dab Kinzer. It took him longer than he had expected, however, to get a clear idea of his young friend's legal attainments. They surprised him a little ; and the advice and direction he had purposed giving required to be modified.

"You have worked hard, I see. Keep it up. Mr. Folio will show you your desk. Don't fail to learn short-hand as fast as you can. May be of great use

to you. You will have enough to do. Ford is at work already."

Everybody in that set of rooms seemed to have enough to do; and Dabney's idea of Mr. Foster's law business grew and grew, all that day and for some days afterwards. It was truly wonderful how many people of all sorts had disputes with each other, and were ready to pay heavily for having them settled in a court-room.

The very magnitude of it kept him quiet; and he half envied Ford Foster the calm assurance with which that young gentleman assumed to know all about it from the very beginning. And yet, almost the first time they were alone together, Ford remarked,—

"I wouldn't have thought it of you, Dabney. If there was any man I had confidence in!"

"What's up now, Ford?"

"Why, father says you've picked up more law at Bullford than I have. It was mean of you, Dabney. It ought to have been share and share alike."

"You may have some of mine."

"Can't eat half he has laid out for me. By the way, Dab, I met Frank to-day. His folks are getting settled. When they are, he wants us both to come over and see him."

"Of course. Frank's a prime good fellow, but it's kind of odd to think of him being an engineer."

"It's odder, a long shot, that all four of Mrs. Myers's boarders should turn up together, at last, in the same city. Do you see much of Dick Lee?"

"Well, not much. We're going to lose Dick."

Dab's face was long enough to justify Ford in exclaiming,—

"What is it? Not consumption?"

"No, not so bad as that; but Dr. Cummings has managed somehow to get him a diploma in spite of his color, and Dick's going South to be assistant surgeon in a colored hospital."

"You don't, now! Richard is actually a saw-bones! If that doesn't beat me! And neither of us is a lawyer yet. Why, Dab, my boy, Dick has got ahead of us."

"Hope he will. His mother has lost fifteen pounds in weight since she heard of it, but she won't let any of her neighbors speak to her unless they bow. She'd go with Dick if Old Bill would let her."

Frank Harley came over in a day or so to tell the young law-students that his course in engineering would not begin until fall, and that meantime he meant to have an out-and-out vacation.

"Pity you can't have one. Whatever possessed you to go right into this mill before you'd had time to catch your breath?"

"My dear Hindu," said Ford, "we didn't need any breath. No man is allowed to breathe here. Wind is an article we save for juries."

It was, or seemed to be, a bit of a hardship, nevertheless ; and they envied Frank his summer freedom. They did not know how carefully lawyer Foster had weighed that question, or how judicially he had decided that he would not permit his own son, at least, to break in upon his habits of study.

“Get them worked in first,” he said to himself. “After they are well broken to harness it’ll be safe to give them as much vacation as they want. It’ll save them six months time if I make them keep right on now.”

His decision may or may not have been a sound one ; but there they both were, at a time when all the rest of the inhabitants of the great city, except perhaps a million or so, were “out of town” enjoying themselves.

The Walters family were among the absentees, as a matter of course. In less than a week Samantha went over to spend a few days with her mother ; and that very next day Ford Foster announced to his remaining companion,—

“I’m alone in the world now, Dabney. Father and mother are going to Saratoga. All our part of town looks ghostly after six o’clock.”

All who went away would come back again some day ; but Dabney could but feel that his launch into the great world had been a sudden one, and that he knew very few people in the great human ocean he had been pushed into.

"It will be a lonely kind of a summer for us, Ford."

"Tell you what, Dab: let's have ourselves bound in calf, or say in sheep, and then we can keep company with those fellows up there on the shelves. There's more law in me now than there is in some of them. All I really need is a good binding."

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN END OF ALL VACATIONS.

MR. and MRS. WALTERS of New-York City were introduced one day that summer, at a fashionable hotel on Lake George, to the Rev. Dr. Harley and his wife, recently of Rangoon, India. It was but a few minutes afterwards that Miss Walters found herself carrying on an active conversation with young Mr. Harley, a graduate of that year from Bullford University; and she was just enough herself, not to mention the fact that she had met him once before, when they were both some years younger. It was quite impossible, however, that many sentences should be exchanged before she remarked,—

“Bullford University? I think I had acquaintances there. Did you meet a Mr. Foster?”

“Room-mate of mine.”

“And a Mr. Kinzer?”

“My other room-mate. Same class. Best friends I have.”

"Indeed! Mr. Foster is thought to have good ability, is he not?"

"Plenty of it, but"—

Frank hesitated just long enough for Jenny to put in her next query:—

"And Mr. Kinzer? Did he make any thing of his books?"

"He? Why, Miss Walters, he was our valedictorian. Best man of his class. We are all proud of him. Sure to make his mark in the world."

It was the turn of Mr. Walters himself to speak.

"Young Kinzer? Glad to hear he did well. Do you know what he means to do now?"

"Studying law in Mr. Foster's office. Young Foster is too."

"Lawyer, eh? Bound to poverty. Well, that's better than a fifth slice of an old farm on the South Shore of Long Island. Sorry. There's more lawyers!"

Perhaps not more, in proportion to the chances of success, than there were of speculators like himself; but men like Mr. Walters are apt to consider their "profession" strictly confined to the small squad who make money in it.

Frank Harley was not a sufficiently close observer to catch the quick flash in Jenny's eyes when he spoke so heartily of Dabney; but he was particularly well pleased with the very gracious character of her

subsequent treatment of himself. It was as agreeable as it was unusual to meet an elegant young lady from the city, decidedly the most attractive person he had seen anywhere near Lake George, who could be, and clearly was, so deeply interested in all he might choose to say of college days and university life. He was looking back to it all, himself, almost sentimentally; and the sympathy of Miss Walters was a refreshing balm to him. She let him talk until she knew a great deal more of the ways and doings of Mr. Dabney Kinzer and his friends at Bullford, than either of them had yet learned concerning her own, during those latter years.

"Glad to hear of young Kinzer again," said Jenny's father, an hour or so later. "I'd lost track of him. An industrious young fellow, but a little dull. Good for nothing but books. If he should ever call at the house, you must treat him civilly for the sake of his family. I think I'll give Mr. Foster that case of mine against the Forty Lodes Mining Company."

He tried to keep his word on his return to the city, and was a little dismayed to learn that Ford's father was already engaged by the other side. That may have been one reason why, shortly afterwards, Mr. Walters lost that suit ignominiously; but it may also have accounted for the fact that he at the same hour imbibed a strong prejudice against Mr. Foster

and his law-partners, and everybody connected with their offices.

"Set of rascals," he was heard to say at the end of it. "Scooped me out of one of the nicest turns I ever made. Don't see how they did it either."

His actual choice of his own counsel may have had something to do with that; for Mr. Foster had remarked, the moment the name was mentioned to him.—

"He's in charge against us, is he? Well, Mr. Folio, we might as well enter up judgment in our favor now, as go through the form of winning that case. I thought Walters was a better judge of men. I wouldn't care to indorse for a man who would trust such a case to such a lawyer."

That was "confidential office-talk;" but nobody outside of the profession can guess how much there is of just such conversation, or what a world of truth there is in it. Now and then a jury gives a too confident counsellor a sharp surprise; but juries have less to do with great cases, and their final results, than the public is prone to imagine.

Frank's summer was indeed a pleasant one. For the first time in long years, he was able to spend it with those who loved him best; and all the world took on a sunnier, rosier hue. His father and mother, too, were enjoying the first long vacation of their useful, hard-working lives, in a way which was

bringing back to them something of the health and strength they had expended so faithfully for those who could not pay them.

The good doctor of divinity was only less proud than his wife of their handsome son ; and it was not often that those with whom they came in contact failed to receive the information at an early hour :

“ My son ? Yes, he took the Greek prize at Bullford. He is to be educated for an engineer.”

Frank’s old chums could hardly say as much of their hot days and nights in the great city ; but Dabney was good to Ford, and several times he took him over to spend Sunday with him on Long Island.

Not the first time he went, however ; and that first Sunday at home brought Dab an incident. It grew out of an old-time memory. Just after dinner, when the sun was pouring down in a way to keep sensible people in-doors, Dabney stole out of the house, and sauntered back, past the barns. Then he jumped the fence into the garden-lot of the old Kinzer homestead, now occupied by a very quiet and humdrum tenant without any young members in his family.

Right on went Dabney, till he came to the fence of the ancient cross-road leading down from the village towards the landing, and on top of that he posted himself literally. It was the very post he had sat upon years and years before, with his last suit of small-boy clothing in a bundle under his arm. He

remembered it as if it had been yesterday ; and then the very thing which could not have been expected came to pass.

That is, there came down the road to pass that spot, a tall, well-dressed young man with a remarkably dark face.

“Dick Lee, is that you?”

“Is dat you, Cap’n Dab?”

“Here I am. I didn’t know you were coming over to-day.”

“Didn’t you? Well, dat’s jes’ de t’ing I made up my mind I’d do. I’s a-goin’ down Souf dis week.”

“What’s the matter with your tongue, Dr. Lee?”

“Wid my tongue? Jes’ wot my mudder’s been a-sayin’ all de mornin’. She tole me she wouldn’t hab no sech talk a-goin’ on in her house, not from me. So I was jes’ a-goin’ down for a pull on de bay, Sunday or no Sunday, so I could let loose a little. I’s a little black clam-digger to-day, I is, Cap’n Dab.”

He did not look much like one ; and Dab Kinzer had to shut his eyes before even the voice and the “tongue” could help him recall the ragged youngster to whom he had so gladly given his roundabouts and the other items he had outgrown.

“Isn’t it queer, Dab?”

“Yes, it’s queer, all of it.”

“You’re taller than Ham Morris now. Taller and broader than any of us. I’s jes’ proud ob you, I is, Cap’n Dab.”

"Not much to be proud of yet, Dick. But I'm proud of you."

"Of me? Dab Kinzer, if I'm more of a man this day than I then had any hope of being, I owe it all to you, under God. You've been a good friend to me all these years. I don't wonder one bit that God has been a good friend of yours. It kind of comes to me that way."

They did not have a long talk there in the broiling sun, and Dr. Lee did not have his pull on the bay. There were shady trees in the pasture-lot of the Morris farm; and under them the two friends, so strangely associated, exchanged their memories of that which had been, and their dreams of that which was to be; and it was a wonderfully valuable incident to Dabney Kinzer. He went home, at last, with an idea slowly forming in his mind, that, if he had already been of some use in the world, there was no good reason why he should not yet accomplish more. He needed a little cooling and studying, about those days. Ford Foster was working hard, after his own fashion; but his best efforts were as nothing to the fierce and feverish strength with which Dab was beginning to grapple the problems of life set before him.

Study? Well, yes: he read law as if he meant to read it all before Mr. Foster came back; and the hardness and dryness of it were a kind of medicine

to him. He also received and swallowed another dose of another sort.

"Fifty dollars? For that article? From 'The Milk-and-Water Magazine'? I'd no manner of hope they'd take it. Why, it isn't in their line, at all. I won't say a word about it to Ford. They say it will be out in the September number. First money I ever got from literature."

It stunned him a little. One curious effect of it was to put a temporary stop to the use of his pen, outside of his law-writing. What could have made that thing a success, when all his really "best efforts" had been such continuous failures?

Another problem, with a long vista of fifty-dollar checks awaiting the solution of it.

Alas for Dabney, and his literary ambition! The September number of "The Milk-and-Water" came in August, as usual; and Mr. Foster bought it in the cars, on his way home. He even read it, and Dab's contribution among the rest; and he at once made up his mind about it. Not a question was asked of either Dabney or Ford as to the use they had made of their time; but it was only the second day after the lawyer's return that he found or made an opportunity to say,—

"By the way, Kinzer, I read your article in 'The Milk-and-Water.'"

"Ah!"

Dab could not think of another word with which to follow that ; and Mr. Foster continued, —

“Good thing. Capital. I was very much interested. May I say a word to you, as a friend ?”

“I should be grateful indeed.”

“Well, then, if you’ve any more of those things you did at college, don’t print ‘em. By and by, in a professional way, you’ll have all the printing you want. The danger is, that you might get a reputation for it. Men might find it out, and fasten on you as the man that did it. Sure ruin ! If I should do it, even now, it would cost me my practice. You use your pen well, though. My wonder is, that the editor of that thing had the sense to print your contribution. He doesn’t often struggle up as high as that.”

Cunning Mr. Foster ! If Dab Kinzer had been a jury, the verdict could not have been more absolutely assured beforehand. All Dab’s visions of literary fame vanished into something a good deal thinner than air, the moment he was made to see that they were inconsistent with the “success in life” upon which he had set his heart, and toward which his will had also set, “as a flint.”

It might have done him good, nevertheless, if he had known into what other hands that number of “The Milk-and-Water” had fallen. Several were discovered to him, very soon ; but it was long after-

wards that he was made aware of the fact that Jenny Walters had hidden that pamphlet from her father.

The Walters family made a long vacation of it; and the head of the house came home a little in advance, on account of sundry movements in the financial world which beckoned him to come and make some more money. It was in that interim that he tried and failed to get Mr. Foster to accept a retainer.

There came a time, however, when Dabney Kinzer felt sure in his mind that the Walters mansion must have duly received its returning absentees, and that he could not longer excuse himself from calling. He tried in vain to give his conscience a reasonable excuse for the fact that he had never in all his life dreaded any thing else quite so much as he did that precise undertaking. He was sure now that the clothing he would wear would bear the most rigid inspection; for he had faithfully studied the matter, and knew what was what.

He had no doubt whatever of his own social position; for was he not all he had ever been, and a valedictorian of Bullford University besides? Not many young men in the great city could walk up Broadway with that kind of feather in their caps.

College honors count,—with some reference to the standing of the institution they are conferred by.

So do family connections, and the ability to wear the right kind of apparel. Nevertheless, Dabney felt as if there were one house in New York which possessed an all-but inaccessible front door.

So he got ashamed of himself for his hesitation, and went one evening to call on Jenny Walters. He would not go too early, and so there was plenty of time for other gentlemen to arrive in advance of him ; but for some reason Dabney had not thought of that, and it was a disagreeable surprise to him, on being ushered into the richly-decorated drawing-room, to find it tenanted by two persons instead of one. His card had gone in before him ; and the first thing that struck him, a good deal as if it had struck him in the face, was the perfect calmness and "poise" of his reception.

"Mr. Kinzer ! I am so glad to see you ! Your old chum, Mr. Harley."

"Frank ? Back again ?"

"How d'ye do, Dabney ? Well — now — unexpected — meant to have been to see you " —

"Do be seated, Mr. Kinzer. I have not met you since your sister Keziah's wedding. Have you heard from her ? I've any number of questions to ask. — No, Mr. Harley, do not go. You can help Mr. Kinzer tell me the news."

Dab had done quite a number of difficult things in his day ; and now he succeeded in saying "Miss

Walters," a good deal as if he had never known her by any other name. She had changed, he saw that ; but every item of the change seemed to be in the way of improvement. She was a young lady now, not a little girl any longer. She had travelled in Europe, was "out in society," was an heiress, was daily in the habit of meeting people, and there could be no doubt but what she was well accustomed to the reception of any amount of admiration. He saw, too, that she was very well acquainted with Frank Harley ; and the how and where of it came out rapidly enough, as the talk ran on. Dabney nerved himself, and did his very best. He did not clearly perceive how desperately Frank was doing the same. "Miss Walters" fairly shone in the vivacity and grace with which she joined in and even directed the conversation.

Nevertheless the call could not be a long one ; for it was, so to speak, under "too high a pressure." Frank Harley, in fact, had been there long enough ; and, when he arose to go, Dabney rose at the same moment.

"Of course," said Jenny, "you two have a whole budget of things to talk over. Remember me to your father and mother, Mr. Harley."

Frank was "retreating in good order," as if he were awaiting the movements of Dabney.

"Don't forget my messages, Mr. Kinzer. You will call again soon, will you not?"

“With pleasure, Miss Walters.”

In a moment more she was alone in the parlor; and the first question she asked herself was,—

“What could have made him get so suddenly white, just when he was saying ‘Miss Walters’? I’m afraid he studies too hard. He promised to come again soon.”

Then she would have been glad of an opportunity to think over all that had been said and unsaid and “looked,” and the meaning of Dabney’s “whiteness;” but the door-bell announced other arrivals, and her time was not her own. It is quite possible, however, that she thought it well over after company hours.

Meanwhile Dab and Frank walked on down the street, exchanging news; and they parted with a mutual agreement to keep close track of one another.

“We must not let the world smash every thing, Frank. Old associations are worth keeping.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CRISIS IN ALL THE MARKETS.

“DAB,” exclaimed Ford Foster, a day or two after that, when they met in the main office, “I’ve got some splendid news !”

“Something good ? Let’s have it.”

“Major Millford’s wounded. Hurt bad.”

“What do you mean ? Good news !”

“Best kind. Arrow through his arm, horse killed under him, big bruise on his head, in a fight with the Piaukengogoes. They’ve given him no end of a furlough, and promised to transfer him to the Department of the East. Sure to bring his barracks within a day’s ride of us.”

“Well, now, that’s better.”

“More’n that. He and Annie are on their way to visit us. Annie and little Annie coming to see me and father and Grandmother Annie. Why don’t you say ‘hurrah’ ?”

“Can’t. It’s against the law.”

"Hang the law! Tell you what, though: mother says father talked in his sleep last night, about 'the said infant aforesaid,' and I don't believe he'd be worth a cent before a jury to-day."

It was truly great news; for the hurts of the gallant major were such as he himself described as "scratches," and the furlough and "transfer" were followed by a complimentary "brevet," while their immediate consequences were of the most practically agreeable description. The home trip was performed in the swiftest manner consistent with the well-being of little Annie; and then "the said infant aforesaid" was in the arms of its uncle Ford and its grandparents.

Dabney made actual haste in going to see Mrs. Major Millford, with an undefined impression that she was the one woman in all the world he really wanted to see; and he was right about it. She was as much astonished as pleased to see what a tall, broad, fine-looking man he had grown into; and she said to her mother,—

"I'm really glad he is not handsome. I hate handsome men. He will never be spoiled by society, but he is real manly. I wonder what is the matter with him, though. He seems low-spirited."

"He is working very hard," said Mrs. Foster. "Your father was saying to me that he never in his life before knew a young man get on so fast. He is

giving him more work in the courts,—more that takes him out of the office."

"Ford must bring him up here as often as he can. I almost feel as if I had a mission to Dabney."

What it was, precisely, she did not succeed in making out; but, a few days after that, she said to her husband,—

"The Army Club again, this evening? Then I'm going to take Ford and Dabney, and go to spend it with Jenny Walters. I met her in Stewart's this very day."

"Working for 'Ford?'" said the major, "or for Kinzer?—or for both? They say she is a great catch."

"Go to your club, sir. Grandma will take care of the baby. You are on furlough, and I am on duty."

The major laughed merrily, and Mrs. Foster gave little Annie another hug; but the call was made at the Walters mansion, even as it had been planned.

It was not to be altogether the thing intended.

Dabney experienced a feeling of something like security all the way, but it vanished the moment those three entered the Walters drawing-room. How should they have guessed, beforehand, that others of Jenny's friends, ladies and gentlemen, had selected that very evening for a more than merely formal social call?

"Dab," whispered Ford, "spoons!"

There they were ; and De Mush and Van Carraway and Winfield Scott Cobb were already sufficiently depressed, when " Mrs. Major Millford, Mr. Foster, and Mr. Kinzer" were announced. The four other young ladies who were present, in addition to Miss Walters, would not so have dampened them ; but what could all their family trees do, in the way of bloom, when overshadowed by that of " Lord Henry Counterbank, younger son of the Duke of Tweed " ? It was awful ! And Lord Henry seemed so well acquainted with Miss Walters ; and they had so many things to say to each other about Scotland, and steamship incidents, and all that detestable kind of reminiscence. It was almost a welcome thing to have Kinzer and Foster come in.

Almost, but not quite ; for Lord Henry seemed to know all about the great fight with the Piaukengoes, and was glad to meet Mrs. Millford, and hoped he might meet her husband ; and then, to cap the climax, when she told him she had come to see Miss Walters, and turned him off so gracefully, he actually lowered himself to talk with that Kinzer fellow, as if he had known him for a year. Dabney surprised himself even ; for he talked wonderfully well with Lord Henry, and he did not know how closely that conversation was watched by at least two women, or how they both felt proud of him.

" Annie," said Ford Foster, at one stage of it,

"look at Dab. If he isn't putting that English son of a duke down about something, and my lord is wilting! It just takes Cap'n Dab, as Dick Lee used to say."

There was quite a party of them, count them all in; and even De Mush was compelled to say to Van Carraway,—

"Look a' here, Van, it's a trifle mixed; but then you can't say but what it's a little out of the common. It's a right good place to come to. Old Walters is an awful plebeian, but he does know how to fill his parlors."

The evening was half over, when "old Walters" himself came in. There was an unusual brightness in his eyes, and a flush upon his face; but he did the right thing by his daughter's guests, except that his greeting to Ford Foster and Dabney had a good deal of ice in it. After that, he disappeared up stairs. Mrs. Walters might be supposed to be up there somewhere, but she rarely made her appearance in the drawing-room. She had been heard to remark,—

"I don't mind it so much, now and then; but them people do keep on talkin', and they want me to talk, and I can't make head or tail of what they say."

A most distinguished company, for the size of it; and Dabney noticed how completely at home Miss Walters seemed. He could hardly realize that she was the same person with the sharp-tongued little

girl he had played with, in and out of school hours, years and years ago, over there on the south shore of Long Island.

Annie was watching him ; and it may have been that she or some other guardian angel had a hand in the changes around the room, which resulted, just before the laws of propriety began to work for a closing-up of the self-made "sociable," in putting Dabney and Jenny almost by themselves, at the farther corner of the drawing-room, in the protection of the music-room door. She was a little flushed with the heat and the excitement, and she looked for the moment even more fascinatingly beautiful than Mrs. Major Millford herself. Yet there was the faintest possible ripple of a tremor in her voice, as she looked up to him, and said, —

"You promised to call again."

"Here I am, am I not ?"

"Now, Mr. Kinzer" —

"Miss Walters" —

Again the strange pallor began at his lips, and swept across his face, and he drew himself up very straight, as if with a great effort to overcome some inward pain ; and all the while he was looking down into her eyes.

"You will come ?"

"No, Miss Walters, I shall never come again."

"Never !"

"I did not know it, not perfectly, until the other evening ; but I know it now. It would be of no use for me to try to conceal it. I am ashamed of myself, Miss Walters. You must forgive me"—

"Dabney! Dabney! Not now! You will come?"

"No, Miss Walters."

"Don't, Dabney! Say 'Jenny'!"

The whiteness, a part of it, had passed from his face into hers, and in both a great light was shining through it.

"I will come, Jenny."

An instant before that, Mrs. Major Millford had remarked to Lord Henry Counterbank,—

"You are to call at the Army and Navy Club, on your way? You will be sure to meet my husband there."

"I shall be delighted."

Now she was looking around her, very innocently, and saying,—

"Ford? It is time for us to go home. Where is Mr. Kinzer? I must return to my baby, my lord. You have no such babies in the Old World"—

"Why, there's Dab," said Ford. "I'll speak to him.

Perhaps both Dabney and Jenny had retained their sense of hearing sufficiently ; for, when Annie mentioned his name, he turned away with a bow and smile, which were, for him, brilliant, and the young

hostess promptly returned to her duties to her other guests.

Lord Henry himself responded to Mrs. Milford's last remark,—

“No babies? Haven't we? You may not know: I am a married man. I would like to hear you debate that question with Lady Counterbank.”

“I'd be glad to do so some day, but I fear the advantage would be too much on my side.”

“Come along, Ford,” she remarked, two seconds later. “Where *is* Mr. Kinzer?”

Dabney himself did not know, for the name had somehow ceased to fit him. Neither did he know where “Miss Walters” was; nor could he have guessed the meaning of the triumphant smile upon the face of Ford's innocent-looking sister.

De Mush said to Van Carraway the moment they reached the sidewalk,—

“It's of no use for us fellows to draw cuts for her if this sort of thing is to go on. She treats those sucking lawyers every inch as well as she treats us.”

“She can't help herself, you know. In her own house.”

They had noticed, however, and they did not fail to speak of it, that, when Miss Walters said good-evening to “that Kinzer fellow,” she said not a word to him about ever coming to her house again.

“And he,” remarked De Mush, “he hadn't the

sense to understand it. He went off as satisfied with himself, and he looked as comfortable, as if the front door had been left open to him."

"He was always a little stupid about some things," replied Van Carraway. "It's in a fellow's bringing-up."

"I don't care," added Cobb: "the army headed the list. There never was a more splendid woman than Mrs. Major Millford. When I told her who I was, she invited me to call. The major is getting on towards an eagle, and it may be a star."

"Brevets?"

"Promotions, maybe. Some kinds of shoulder-straps will cover almost any thing. She's fit for a general's wife, she is."

Winfield Scott Cobb had been beaten as completely as if he had been a squad of Sioux.

Dabney Kinzer walked away from the Walters mansion that evening in a singularly absorbed and silent mood; but Mrs. Annie Millford, on the other hand, seemed disposed to do an unusual amount of talking. She rather neglected Dab, and directed nine-tenths of her sparkling remarks to her brother. No doubt they were all very good, for Annie was an excellent talker; but not one of them showed greater penetration on her part, than something she said to Ford after reaching home, and dismissing Mr. Kinzer.

"Dab did splendidly, Annie."

“Did you see it? I wonder what they could have quarrelled about. I worked hard to give them a chance to make up.”

“Make up?”

“Why, of course: it didn’t take them five minutes. All such things are so silly. Those two have known each other long enough to have more sense.”

“Whew!” whistled Ford. “Upon my word, I never thought of that.”

“You’re only a man, Ford.”

“I’ve sometimes feared as much. Dab Kinzer’s another. Did you go in, and give him a lift?”

“Just a little one. Dabney pounded a tramp for me once. Now I feel as if I were even with him.”

“Pounded a tramp for him. That’s complimentary to Miss Walters.”

“Not Jenny. I can’t guess who has been Dabney’s tramp.”

Poor Frank Harley! Neither of them guessed what an amount of skilful “engineering” was rendered altogether useless by the results of that self-gathered “sociable.”

The next morning was a busy one at Mr. Foster’s office,—so busy that neither of his favorite students had a chance to read the papers with any care, or they might have learned something. Mrs. Dr. Cummings did not pay much attention to the news, either, especially to that part of it which related to finance;

and when her mother and Pamela arrived, and asked her to go with them to make their long-deferred and much-promised call upon the Walters family, Samantha was particularly willing.

"I hope nobody is sick," she said, when they paused in front of the stately brown-stone front. "The house looks all shut up."

So it did. Curtains drawn down. Outer door of vestibule closed. As sombre as so much elegance could be.

"The ladies are not receiving calls to-day," was the icy remark of the servant who answered the door-bell.

"Nonsense!" sharply exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer. "I'm not coming all this distance for nothing. Take our cards right in."

She was accustomed to be obeyed; and the door-opener felt it so very strongly, that he asked them in, and carried their cards up-stairs, contrary to all the usages. It was a piece of Long-Island barbarism, but it produced a truly wonderful effect.

A minute,—it might have been a minute and a half,—and there was a quick rustle of a dress upon the stairs, a hasty pair of feet entered the room, and then Mrs. Kinzer was astonished by a pair of arms thrown around her neck, and a very sweet voice saying,—

"Oh, I am so glad you've come! When did you hear of it?"

"Why, Jenny!" exclaimed Pamela, "what has happened?"

Samantha's mind ran over a long list of accidents and diseases, like a flash, and she wished her husband had come with her; but Mrs. Kinzer only hugged Jenny, and whispered,—

"What is it, dear? I did not know any thing had happened. But I'm glad I'm here. What is it?"

"You do not know? It's in all the papers this morning. The panic. Father's failure. He is only one of ever so many. He is all but crazy over it, and mother won't leave her bed. Oh, Mrs. Kinzer!"

"Now, my dear, come and sit down by me. Worse things than that have happened."

Samantha and Pamela would hardly have known how to meet such an emergency, all by themselves, but they could back up Mrs. Kinzer magnificently; and Jenny Walters thought she had never before known what a comfort there might be in having a sufficiently large—well, such good old neighbors and friends as they were.

"When have you seen Dabney?" asked his mother carelessly, after a while; and a sudden flush of color arose in Jenny's face as she responded,—

"Dabney? He was here last night with Mr. Foster and his sister. They spent the evening here."

Pamela caught Samantha's eye just then, and said nothing; but Mrs. Kinzer put her arms again around Jenny, and said,—

"Now, my dear, you must not let this thing trouble you too much. Riches have wings ; but there are other things, and better things, that never fly away."

It would have required a large pair to have carried Dabney's mother for any extended flight, and so she made that morning call a long one.

Mrs. Walters did not come down stairs ; and Mr. Walters was away down among the stormy scenes of the stock-market, trying to rescue some of his several "grand operations" from the general wreck. It was a bad day for speculators, however ; and the close of it left him wondering what he should do with his brown-stone front, and his costly "social position."

The day could not go by without the tidings from Wall Street being well understood in such an office as Mr. Foster's ; and Dabney went to his supper with a strange tide of terribly mingled emotions pouring through him, as it seemed to him, in all directions. A good deal to his surprise, he found his mother and Pamela waiting for him ; and after tea the former took him a little one side.

"Dabney," she said, "ought you not to have mentioned this affair of yours to me ? Have I not deserved your confidence ?"

"What affair, mother ?"

"Dabney ! We called upon Jenny to-day."

"Did you ? I am so glad ! Did you see her ? Speak to her ?"

“Not about any thing in particular. I think I see how it is. But ought you not to go and see her at such a time as this?”

“Why, mother” —

“Go, Dabney! Never mind how it looks. It isn’t a time for any kind of ceremony.”

How could he explain? He tried to, but he could not find in his brain any words which would exactly serve his purpose; and so, a very little later, if only by way of escaping from his dilemma and his mother, he put on his hat, and walked out of the house.

“Gone all to pieces,” he muttered as he strolled along. “That’s what I heard said about him to-day. Poor Jenny! It’s all so sudden, so wonderful! If I could only have said a few words more last night! I don’t care: I’ve known her ever since she could walk. Mother’s right, only she doesn’t know any thing about it. I’m going straight there. Maybe they won’t let me in, but I’ll try.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE QUARTET BROKEN AT LAST.

THAT had been a trying day in the Walters mansion. The head of the family came home to a late dinner, only to rush out again immediately afterwards. Mr. Walters was a man of nerve, and he bore up bravely under his sudden and unlooked-for disasters ; but all his wife and daughter could learn from him concerning them was embodied in, —

“ Guess we’ll have to go back to Long Island to live. Glad I settled all that property on you two. There won’t be much of any thing else left.”

The house retained its shut-up and unreceptive appearance, as much as to say to passers-by, —

“ The panic has been here. Respect the misfortunes of the great.”

Jenny tried to spend the evening in her room, after a vain attempt at comforting her mother ; but a feeling of unrest shortly carried her feet down-stairs and into the great gorgeous drawing-room. She

even drew a chair to one of the front windows, and sat there, shrouded by the sweeping folds of the curtains, dreamily peering out upon the street.

“We do not belong here any more, I suppose. How good it was of Mrs. Kinzer to insist on seeing me to-day! She has been a good mother to all of them.”

Her thoughts ran on, vaguely but rapidly; and she found them prone to wander backward rather than forward. The light was turned low in the room behind her; and strict orders had been given the servants to admit no living human being—if any should be so strangely forgetful of all the proprieties as to call. No one would: she felt sure of that. And yet a moment did come, in her lonely watch at that window! Her breath came and went very quickly.

“He is looking at the house. He would come in if he dared. He is going away. No, he isn’t”—

She sprang to her feet, and hurried to the front door. Hardly had the answering “gong” in the basement responded to a somewhat hesitating pull of the bell-knob, before the portal was open wide.

“Come in, Dabney.”

“O Jenny! I was afraid”—

“Of course. Come right into the parlor.”

In an instant more she was at the head of the basement-stairs, quietly informing somebody there,—

"You need not answer the door, Thomas. If anybody comes, tell them we are not receiving."

"Yes, ma'am,—certainly."

Dabney had not found a chair; and it was not because of the dimness of the chandelier, for the room was, as it seemed to him, flooded with a sort of soft, sweet radiance, the light of which grew clearer and brighter as Jenny came into it.

"I almost knew you would come, Dabney."

"There was no chance last night, Jenny. I never had one."

"Seems to me now, I knew it long ago."

"I did, and yet I did not; for it grew with me, I think. It is a part of me. Nothing could tear it away."

He did not say what "it" was, but they both seemed to know perfectly well. Jenny was trying hard to say something, but she could not. Her lips opened with a slow, quivering motion. Both her hands went out, until Dabney caught them in his. And then there was no need for her to say a word; for her head was on his shoulder, and she was sobbing.

When Dabney returned to Samantha's house, somewhat late that evening, he was once more greeted by a lady in the doorway,—an elderly lady this time.

"You have seen her, Dabney?"

"Mother, I can tell you now the very thing I could not have told you before."

"My son, do you know, I always had a kind of an idea it would be so some day. It's made me feel like a mother to her. She needs one too. I've known Mrs. Walters since before she was married, and it's a great credit to Jenny to have done so well."

"You don't know her, mother!"

"Don't I? Well, I suppose I will one of these days. Come in, and talk about it. I'm almost glad she isn't so awfully rich. It won't be long now before you'll be doing well. I can help you too. I hate long engagements."

"You are a mother worth having, anyhow. Oh, won't I work!"

In fact, it was less than a year from that time when Mr. Foster one day remarked,—

"Mr. Kinzer, there's one thing I think I've neglected long enough. A man who does as much as you do, and in the way you do it, ought to be paid for it."

Dabney bowed respectfully, but there was a fluttering at his heart which forbade him saying anything.

"Your salary will begin at a hundred a month. That's all I mean to give Ford. You will earn more soon enough. After you and he have passed your examination, I shall have something more to say."

"Thank you, Mr. Foster."

It was purely a matter of business, without a particle of what is falsely called "liberality;" but it had great consequences.

"Twelve hundred a year," said Mrs. Kinzer, when he told her. "Jenny has five hundred a year, all her own. Seventeen. I'm sure you should have seven more from our property. Twenty-four hundred. Dab, you'd better go right away, and tell Jenny. Then tell her I want to see her, just as soon as she can come over."

The Walters family were then living, once more, as tenants of the old Kinzer homestead; but Mr. Walters still spent the greater part of his time in the city. He had, at first, rebelled a little against the idea of Jenny's "throwing herself away upon a penniless young lawyer;" but the facts of the case grew upon him. Dabney was not exactly "penniless;" and, when Mr. Walters actually went to see lawyer Foster, he received a piece of unpaid-for counsel which opened his eyes.

"Young Kinzer? Yes, sir, I understand you perfectly. No need to explain. The idea of a Wall-street lame-duck turning up his nose at a man who will one day be on the bench! He is a good match for the governor's daughter. It's the best speculation you ever made, sir."

"Ah—h'm! Good-morning, Mr. Foster. Good-morning, sir!"

Mr. Walters walked out of that office very stiffly indeed, without even acknowledging the low bow he received from Ford on his way.

"Dab," said the latter, that afternoon, "I don't believe your future father-in-law will ever be a client of ours."

"Why not, Ford?"

"He left father in a hurry to-day, and when I went in I found the room full of pepper. Got sent about my business, right off. But I heard him chuckle, too, when I was shutting the door. It wasn't a law-case, Dabney."

Neither of them was in any wise capable of looking into Frank Harley's room that evening, or they might have learned something more, relating to the affairs of their old chum.

Frank was sitting by his table, with his head bowed upon his hands, and seemed to be in a state of unusual dejection.

"It's no use," he muttered: "I've done it. I waited too long before going over to see her. Engaged to Dab Kinzer! I declare! He always did win the prizes."

If it had been a more serious matter for Frank,—as serious, for instance, as it had been for Dabney,—he probably would not have waited so long. As it was, he had made a trip over to Long Island, and had returned with news to consider.

"I might as well take father's offer, then, and go to Europe. I'll come back fit to engineer the deepest mine in California, anyhow,—or a railway to the moon. I'll do something, yet, that Dab and Ford can't do."

That was a good resolution ; and the loyal keeping of it did not prevent Frank, just before he set off upon his tour of trans-Atlantic study, from once more going over to Long Island.

Every root and branch of the Kinzer and Morris and Foster and Walters families was gathered under one roof upon that occasion. That, of course, included Dr. Richard Lee, home for the purpose, and Glorianna, and old Bill Lee.

The house was too full for any thing ; and the tall young man on whose arm Pamela Kinzer was leaning whispered to her, —

"We won't have such a crowd as this is, will we ?" And she said, "No, Theodore, I prefer something quieter. Not nearly so many."

"It's jes' grand," remarked Glorianna to Dick. "It takes de Kinzers. Dey's de sort of folks for me. Jes' look at Dab, now ! Don't he !"

"Best fellow !" Dick was really too happy to say more, and at that moment Frank Harley came up to shake hands with him.

Lawyer Foster had come over at something of a sacrifice, under the apparent compulsion of Annie

and her mother; but the way he entered into the spirit of the thing, after he got there, surprised him. He managed to get a word with the bridegroom.

“Dabney, my dear boy, I wish you all the happiness in the world.”

“Thank you, Mr. Foster.”

“There’s a grand future before you, my young friend. By the way, I hope you rightly understood the remark I made to you, the other day, about your salary?”

Dabney’s eyes opened in an expression of blank surprise, as he mechanically responded,—

“A hundred a month.”

“For the first three months, of course. That’s my rule. Then one-fifty. After you pass, and are admitted to the bar, *two*. It’s all right, my dear boy. Just look at Dr. Lee and his mother. That’s some of our work, Dabney.”

“Dab,” said Ford, a little later, evidently referring to his father, “do look at the old gentleman! I’m going to send mother after him. Anybody would think it was his wedding. It’s all right: your mother’s got hold of him, and she’ll make him behave himself.”

Mrs. Kinzer had her hands full that day, and so did Ham Morris and Miranda; but they acquitted themselves magnificently. As Ham said,—

"We're getting used to it. There's nothing like practice, Dab?"

"No, Ham," responded Professor Byerly, "you can't have him. Keziah and I want him for a while."

"Fact," said Ham: "they've got him. — Miranda, there's another carriage at the gate. *Is* there any more room? Can't you take two or three more of them up stairs, and show them the baby?"

"I'll try. Most of them have seen it already."

"Give 'em another look. We mustn't let anybody say the house wasn't large enough."

Even Mrs. Walters came out unusually well, and was a credit to herself to the very last; and her husband declared that it was the proudest day of his life.

"Jenny!"

"What is it, Dabney?"

"Time, dear. Train leaves in thirty minutes."

"Yes, Dabney, I'll be ready."

Mrs. Kinzer was also on the watch lest something should go wrong; and the bride and groom were at the railway-station in good season, without a shadow of unseemly hurry.

"Look, the sun is behind a cloud, Dabney."

"No, Jenny, he is out again. He will stay out, for us, always. — Mother, one kiss more. Good-by."

The sun shone down upon them as if he were making an especial effort; and there were smiles

shining through all the glad tears on the loving faces behind them, as the train moved away faster and faster, bearing with it the full-grown life and the true love of DAB KINZER.

The quartet was broken at last.

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